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MISS FALKLAND AND OTHER STORIES.

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AND

OTHER STORIES.

BY

CLEMENTINA BLACK.

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C. B.

BLOOMSBURY, *April*, 1892.

I.

MISS FALKLAND.

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TWO young men were sauntering together in a hotel garden. A concourse of blue-grey mountains extended before them; on their right rose the white and green building with its many balconies, its projecting eaves, and its red and white flag of Switzerland floating from the topmost gable. The fresh air, edged with the first sharpness of snow from the peaks, breathed into their faces. It collected many things on its passage, that keen mountain air—shrill accents of French, and guttural murmurs of German, and a phrase or two of American, prolonged and nasal. These two saunterers, however, contributed to it nothing but a few thin spirals of blue smoke and the flavour of two cigars that were not Swiss. They were

well-grown young men, who moved well, and they were dressed in light-coloured clothes that came from no Swiss tailor. They presently turned a corner where the garden path descended to the meadow lands below, and there, on a seat in the curve of the low wall, they found a young lady.

She was slender, dark-haired, and pale; her dress was jaunty and fashionable; it even verged on the showy; but her air and posture were not in accord with her attire. Her hands were folded together on her knees, her head had a little melancholy droop, and her eyes, as they looked out absently to the blue distance, were anxious and wistful. Her hands relaxed when the strollers came in sight, and her face relaxed too, and ceased to be expressive; but the pensive attitude had had time to catch the notice of one of them. They turned their intruding steps another way, and when they were out of earshot, he asked, "Who is that girl?"

He spoke with the slow vowels, the limited scale of notes, and the tranquil voice of an Englishman.

His companion, who was the younger, the

slimmer, and a trifle the more precisely dressed, answered him in the same language and accent. "She is a Miss Falkland, a daughter of that blackguard of a fellow Falkland, who is here."

"Falkland—who is Falkland? I don't seem to remember the name."

"Oh, you saw him last night in the billiard-room, the man with the grey moustache who was playing with Lancaster. He is always to be met about in foreign places. The Maddens know all about him. It seems he belongs to a very decent family—the Worcestershire Falklands—and he was in a very good regiment; but there was an unpleasantness at cards, and he had to sell out."

"Lately?"

"Oh, no; five-and-twenty years or so ago. Since then, as I tell you, he is always to be met abroad. I should not advise you to play cards with him. They do say he lives by it."

"And is his daughter always with him?"

"Well, since she has been grown up—the last four or five years, perhaps."

"Poor thing!"

"Oh, well, I don't know; habit is everything,

you know, and she is used to it. The Maddens say he is doubly dangerous now because he is husband-hunting as well. I should think he is likely to hunt a good while longer."

The elder man did not answer; something in the tone jarred upon him. They walked on for a few yards in silence, and then met an acquaintance, whose talk changed the current of their thoughts, and Miss Falkland was forgotten.

Nor did Mr. Arthur North, whose fancy she had momentarily touched, again remember her existence until the evening's *table d'hôte*. He and his friend, Frank Conway, were beside the Miss Maddens when this young lady came in with her father. She was dressed in a black dress, thin and silky, cut open in the neck, and with sleeves that ceased at the elbow. She wore a diamond pin in her dark hair, and a diamond brooch, fastening in a scarlet flower, at her breast. Mr. North's attention was called to these facts by hearing Miss Eleanor Madden whisper to Frank Conway, "Here comes that girl again, in her low dress and her diamonds."

He then observed that the other English ladies, for the most part, wore woollen or even

cotton dresses, high to the throat. Miss Madden herself had a dress of light brown woollen stuff, with a linen collar. Some of the French and Swiss ladies, however, were at least as sumptuously attired as Miss Falkland, and the remark struck him as a little unkind and even a little ill-bred. Miss Madden was so prosperous, so rosy, so assured of herself and her position, so serenely certain of receiving from the world her full share of pleasure and deference, that Miss Falkland's pale and serious face was by comparison touchingly humble. Looked at by itself, however, there was no humility in her aspect. She was self-possessed in the utmost degree, her pale tranquillity seemed absolutely incapable of receiving disturbance. Yet she was not self-absorbed or absent, she gave due attention to the remarks addressed to her by Mr. Lancaster, and seemed to reply to his satisfaction; but there was no light of animation, no eagerness of youth about her face, her speech, or her movements. To a beautiful woman, this excessive calm might have added the crowning charm of the enigmatical, but Miss Falkland was neither more nor less

beautiful than six in any dozen of English girls; her face, that is to say, was fair enough to delight the eyes of those who loved her, and not fair enough to catch the eye of a stranger. It was not to the eye but to the compassion of Arthur North that her pensive figure had appealed, and he continued to observe her throughout the meal. To see young Lancaster beside her was another item in the catalogue of reasons for which she claimed his pity. He had known Lancaster when he was at college, and was aware of his incurable tendency to get himself into undesirable company. He was by no means a villain, but he was that much more difficult and dangerous creature, a ne'er-do-weel. North remembered the hints of Frank Conway, and thought within himself that if Captain Falkland proposed to secure Lancaster as a husband for his daughter, her future prospects looked of the gloomiest. He remarked that Lancaster drank too much wine, and that Captain Falkland also drank much, but without seeming affected by it.

Later in the evening, when the two Englishmen were lounging on the balcony of Mrs.

Madden's sitting-room, Frank, as usual, at Eleanor's elbow, and North giving his attention chiefly to the mother and younger sister, he heard the name of Falkland once more.

"You will see," said Eleanor, in her clear and trenchant tones, the very accent of which defied you to speak your English otherwise, if you would maintain a claim to breeding, "You will see that those Falklands will try and get hold of them; they always try to catch foreigners."

"What foreigners are you talking of?" asked her mother.

"The Vicomtesse d'Yverdonne and her son," Frank answered, "who are coming here, it seems, to-morrow. They are awful swells in their way—old family, Legitimists, *drapeau blanc*, and all that kind of thing. I heard about them in Paris. The old lady won't hear of her son marrying any girl who can't trace her pedigree back to the time of Charlemagne, and as there aren't many of them, it begins to look as if d'Yverdonne would be the last of his title."

"And you will see," said Eleanor with a laugh, "that the Falklands will be their first acquaintances."

"I wonder how Mr. Lancaster will like that," said Janey, the younger Miss Madden; but this remark was met by chill silence from her mother and sister, for Janey was only seventeen, and her mother did not encourage anything in the nature of sharpness and forwardness.

"Have these Falklands been here long?" North asked, feeling the conversation about to lapse.

"They came about a week before we did," Mrs. Madden replied, "and at first they were always trying to make friends with us; but we knew who they were; and, besides, one doesn t care to make acquaintances in hotels. The set they have made at that poor Mr. Lancaster is really shocking. I do think Frank ought to say something to Mr. Lancaster, considering that he knew him at college."

"Why don't you tell North to speak to him, Mrs. Madden? He knew him too, and he is a much more suitable person to go about giving good advice than I am, and a fellow of Lancaster's very own college besides."

"I am afraid good advice is thrown away on that young man, Mrs. Madden," said

North. "He is bound to ruin himself, one way or another, and I don't think it much matters whom he finds to help him."

"Oh, dear! Don't you think you are a little hard on poor Mr. Lancaster, Mr. North?"

"And don't you think you are a little hard on poor Captain Falkland, Mrs. Madden?"

"Ah! but you don't really know what terrible people these Falklands are. Why, do you know Captain Falkland actually ——"

And then followed in detail the history of that "unpleasantness at cards" which had resulted in depriving Her Majesty of Captain Falkland's military services.

North listened with polite attention, and when the history had been followed by a rapid sketch of the Captain's subsequent career, said gently: "What a terrible thing for the daughter to have such a father!"

"Yes, very sad, to be sure; but then no doubt she takes after him. And her manners are too dreadful."

"I thought she seemed very quiet at dinner."

"Oh, yes, she can be quiet enough when she chooses; but—would you believe it?—one

night she was actually smoking on the balcony till past eleven—and you know how late that is here—with a young Russian. And she acted with him, one evening, French scenes, horrid things, I believe, but of course we did not go in to see them. Oh, it was a most desperate flirtation! There were bets about it among the gentlemen, and really I should not have been surprised to hear they were engaged; but all at once one morning there came a telegram for M. Soltsky, and he went away at a minute's notice. Then they began on Mr. Lancaster, but they were a little quieter over that, because of course an Englishman doesn't like quite the same sort of thing."

Arthur North, as he sat and listened, and watched the lights of sunset come upon the mountains, felt a desiccating hopelessness increase upon him at every word. This comely matron, with her wholesome face, her plump hands comfortably folded on her lap, and her air of motherly benignity, was withering up the world for him, and making him see his fellow-creatures with the eyes of Swift, as "an odious race of little, contemptible vermin."

He saw Miss Falkland as Mrs. Madden drew her, an ignoble adventuress; and Mrs. Madden as reflected in her own words, eager to tear to pieces the weaker and more desperate fellow-creature. Frank and Eleanor, murmuring their betrothed and sanctioned courtship at the other end of the balcony, seemed to him to be but playing puny parts in a trivial comedy; he laughed in himself with a cynical amusement at Miss Janey, sitting by with the demure countenance of the good child who hears the naughty child rebuked. Life and humanity felt all small and sordid to him, and himself at least as shallow and meaningless as the rest. He rose up with a sense of being stifled, and went away into the garden. The brief Swiss twilight had begun to thicken, and the garden was already growing dark. By-and-by he drew near to the seat where Miss Falkland had been sitting when he saw her first. She was here again, but not alone. An elderly Swiss lady, who was staying alone in the hotel, and belonged to none of its many little sets, was beside her. North lingered a minute in the shadow, and overheard a few

phrases of their talk. Madame Moisson was telling Miss Falkland about her little grandchildren. Miss Falkland answered with interest; her French was very correct and her accent pure. Then he heard Madame Moisson declare that it was getting late; there was a rustle of skirts, and the ladies paced slowly by him. This brief vision of Miss Falkland cast a little light amid the gloomy and cynical reflections by which he was oppressed. Miss Falkland, in herself, was indeed of the slightest possible importance to him; but his instinctive desire to think well of his neighbours had been roughly shaken, he feared another bruise, and to find her in innocent converse with a grandmother was a surprise which inspired not only gratification, but almost gratitude.

North spent the next day wandering in the mountains, slept in a *châlet*, and came back on the second afternoon. When he arrived, he found that Frank Conway was out with the Maddens. He had not felt solitary while he was alone in the mountains, but he had a feeling of solitude in returning to this great building full of people, and finding no one to

greet him. At six o'clock, Frank came to his room cordial and cheery; North related briefly his trifling adventures, and heard how the time had been passed in his absence.

"And Lancaster has gone away," said Frank, by-and-by, "and Captain Falkland has gone off somewhere, this morning, and the Vicomtesse and her son are here in all their glory."

The clangour of a monstrous bell here called them to the dining-room. North was surprised, as they went downstairs, to see the figure of Miss Falkland descending before them.

"I thought you said Captain Falkland had gone away?" he said to his comrade.

"Oh, yes, but he is coming back," Frank answered, with a look that appeared to be full of meaning, although North did not exactly know how to interpret it.

The dining-table had changed, even in these two days; familiar faces had gone, and new faces had come in their place. North usually sat at one extremity of the line formed by Frank and the Maddens; to-night he found

the line lengthened by an English clergyman, who seemed to be an old acquaintance of Mrs. Madden's, and who sat upon her right, while North was on her left. A party of Germans generally sat beyond him, but they had vanished, and in the chair next him Miss Falkland sat in their stead. Next to her was Madame Moisson, but Madame Moisson was no longer alone; a lady, whose likeness proclaimed them mother and daughter, sat at her elbow, and they talked together continually with smiles and nods. Mrs. Madden, on her side, was very much taken up by the newly arrived clergyman. Thus it happened that both North and Miss Falkland were a little neglected, and sat side by side in silence. North, who was extremely sensitive to slight changes of the social temperature, felt that sense of solitude deepen which had met him at the hotel door. He was accustomed to solitude and liked it; but solitude in a crowd tastes differently. He remembered that his neighbour was probably even more sensible of exclusion than himself, and that to her exclusion might seem intentional. He turned to

her with a few words of trivial remark, spoken in a key of the most careful deference. Miss Falkland replied in just the proper key, neither too coldly nor too eagerly, and an intermittent conversation was kept up between them throughout the meal.

Two or three days went by. Miss Falkland continued to sit next to North, and their acquaintance, without advancing further, became an established thing, which both of them would have missed. He observed that she was very much alone in the day, and that she seemed to make no effort to gain companions. Once or twice, when he saw her sitting in the garden, he was inclined to join her; but he remembered the tongues of Mrs. Madden and her daughters, and abstained.

One day, however, he met Miss Falkland away from the hotel and the gossips. He had walked out to the neighbouring village of Salex, which exercised a great charm upon his imagination. Salex lies along the side of a hill that descends steeply towards a noisy watercourse; mountains face it, and mountains lie behind, and in front a long descent opens

towards the plain. Its position therefore was charming. But it was a charm rather of character than of position which gave this little settlement its attractiveness. The *châlets* were well kept; there were flowers in most of them; many were curiously carved; the children were clean and healthy, and greeted the casual stranger with a pretty politeness that had nothing in common with the mendicancy of more frequented districts.

Behind the church of Salex is a bench beneath a row of limes, and as North emerged from the arched passage under the church into the bright sunlight, he saw Miss Falkland sitting on this bench. A little flaxen-headed child was standing at her knee; another stood shyly a little farther off. She was talking to them with a look of sweetness and animation that transformed her. North saw her for the first time looking happy. It was a homely and comfortable little scene. The stone wall of the church made its background; the *cure*, with its green-tinted plaster, and its obliquely striped green and white shutters, faced the bench; and above the bench

fluttered the bright green leaves of the lime trees, standing out against the clear blue sky. North's shadow fell across; Miss Falkland looked up. Seeing a figure from the outer world, her face stiffened a little, and she became once more the Miss Falkland of the hotel. The change saddened him, and brought back his original feeling of compassion. Did this girl feel herself always an Ishmaelite?

He drew nearer, and asked: "Is this your first visit to Salex, Miss Falkland?"

"Yes," said she, still holding in hers the brown hand of the little peasant. Then, seeming to feel this answer somewhat brief and chilling, she added: "What a happy, thriving little place it looks!"

"Doesn't it? But, as a Salex woman said to me, up at a milking village the other day: '*Vous savez, on est si laborieux à Salex.*' They have got a history too. Do you know that as far back as thirteen hundred and something, they refused to be at the orders of the Duke of Savoy, and that he had to compound with them and let them go? Then a hundred years ago they had a battle up at their *alpe*

with some French troops, whom they drove off, and the leader was brought here to this very *cure* to die of his wounds."

"Really?" said Miss Falkland, and turning to the little girl she explained that monsieur was saying that the people of Salex were so fond of freedom.

"Ask her about the big fountain," said North.

"What is it about the big fountain, *petite?*" asked Miss Falkland.

"It is up there," said the child, pointing through the church. But she was too shy to tell the story of the fountain, and it was North who related how the men of Salex dragged up the great block of marble before the road was made, and in spite of wagers that the feat was impossible; how, after three days, they were completely exhausted, and the wager about to be lost, when the women of the village, turning out at midnight, went down, one and all, and dragged it up by the morning.

"It was well done, was it not?" said the young Englishwoman, stroking the child's cheek. And with a little sigh, turning to

North, she added: "One would like to be a Salécienne."

"Yes, indeed," thought North, "if one happened to be the daughter of Captain Falkland."

They went to look at the famous basin of the fountain. It was a great block of black marble from the quarries fifteen miles away. Two young women were washing clothes in the lesser trough, sheltered by a wooden canopy from the July sunshine. North ventured to suggest to Miss Falkland that she would scarcely relish this part of a Salécienne's life.

"One would have at least the consolation of feeling that one was useful," said she. "It comes over me sometimes, when I look along the *table d'hôte*, that we are a company of the most idle and useless creatures that ever lived upon the earth. We ought to take spades and rakes, and be made to weed the hotel garden."

"Oh, well—some of us, we may hope, work at other times."

"Yes, I suppose, some of us," she answered;

and North perceived that her "we" had been little more than editorial.

They walked on to the end of the village, where there was a view which he assured her she ought to see. A little seat planted on a green slope above the road commanded a really magnificent outlook. They sat down here, soothed into inactivity by the noise of the watercourse below in the valley; and North continued to unfold the limited stores of his knowledge concerning Salex.

"They have a settlement at Annaveyaz, up in the mountains," he informed Miss Falkland, "which is supposed to be quite a model among milking villages. Certainly it is the cleanest and the prettiest I have seen."

"Is it far off?" she asked, fired with a desire to see the lesser Salex. The busy freedom of this modest community felt to her just now like fresh air in the lungs; it seemed to her that a tiny Salex high up among the hills would be a paradise on earth.

"Oh, no, it is not far; fifteen miles, perhaps, to go and to come back."

"Oh, my father would never go so far as

that; and, besides, he does not care for villages."

She looked disappointed; then an adventurous plan presented itself.

"Is it a good road? Should I lose myself if I went alone?" she asked. Her eyes as she put the question were those of a child who meditates some great enterprise of doubtful permissibility.

"There is a very good road most of the way. Then you have to cross the Salèce—which is nearly dry up there, however—and go through a wood. You turn off by some *châlets*. Oh, no, you would not lose yourself seriously. But if you feel inclined to go up to Annaveyaz, had you not better let me meet you at the *châlets* and take you across the wood? I should be much pleased if you would."

"Oh, but—thank you very much. It does seem such a pity never to see anything of the real life of the places. But you have been to Annaveyaz already. I don't want to drag you up again on my account."

"Oh, but I should like of all things to go again. It is three years since I was there.

We slept there one night, when we were going on to the Diablerets. I assure you I should go in any case."

"Thank you very much indeed, then. I shall be very glad. When shall it be?"

"When you like."

"Could it be to-morrow? One never knows how long the fine weather is going to last; and then my father might come back any time, and he might want me to do something else. He would not see any use in my going up to see a village that was not a show place."

"Very well, then, let it be to-morrow," said North. "The road goes straight up from beside the shoemaker's. Would you rather go early, or not?"

"Oh, yes, please."

"Suppose you start out soon after breakfast, then. I shall go round by a steeper path and come down along the road to meet you, so there will be no chance of our missing each other."

"Oh, thank you. It is very kind of you."

"Not at all; it is always a pleasure to show

a place that one knows to a new person who appreciates it."

"Oh, dear! I hope I shall come up to your standard of appreciativeness."

North failed to reply, as Frank would assuredly have done, that he had no doubt on this point. This one phrase had just a touch —very slight, but still a touch—of something that was not quite to his taste. He was, no doubt, over fastidious, but his fastidiousness was a form of benevolence. It hurt him to perceive in his fellow-creatures anything that compelled him to think in any way the worse of them. This sounding of a note of personal relation, which might perhaps be the first tentative hint of something like flirtation, was too much in the fashion of the Miss Falkland whom Mrs. Madden had sketched to be agreeable to him. A little shadow came over his serene mood; he could not himself have traced its cause, but when he glanced at his companion and found her paying no attention to him the cloud lifted. She was apparently entirely occupied by the glories before her. There was a little air of surprise, of wonder,

of new life, about her. She was not smiling, but her face had a look of calm content, and her cheek a faint tint of colour. She looked, for once, as if she were no longer holding herself under control. North began to see the face that she must have had as a child. The pathetic view of her life came back upon him more strongly than ever, as he thought within himself that this was the girl whom nature meant her to be. She came back out of this momentary absence, and was Miss Falkland again.

"Well, I hope it will be fine," she said, turning to him and rising from the bench. "I think it will, don't you? And now, *au revoir*: I am going to turn homeward, and you, I suppose, are going on."

North, who had started with no settled plan, had had vague notions of walking back with her; but he felt this speech a dismissal, and walked on obediently towards the valley.

The next day was as fine as ever. North started early, and by ten o'clock found himself on the road which Miss Falkland must pass. He sat down on some logs beside the

path, and awaited her coming with reflections that were not altogether free from alarm. His life in England was quiet, studious, and solitary; the society of a young woman was something of which he had scarcely any experience, and this walk with Miss Falkland presented itself to him almost as an adventure. He wondered vaguely what she would do and say: whether she would become too tired; whether perhaps she would be afraid of cattle; whether she would be too fastidious to enter a *châlet*.

Presently he heard some one mounting leisurely, and saw her approach, framed in by the arch of the trees, and looking about her with interest as she came. The apparition was reassuring. North went forward with the happiest presentiments to greet her.

"You found your road easily?" said he.

"Oh, yes, quite easily, thank you. What a pretty road it is. Do we turn off here?"

"No, not just yet. We go up as far as those *châlets* there before us. The road goes farther yet; but at this season, when the Salèce is dry, there is no need to follow it."

They walked on side by side, talking of the minute incidents that presented themselves—of the grey horse-flies, the sky, the trees, the raspberries in the hedge. There was a touch of constraint between them as yet, a little lingering atmosphere of the *table d'hôte*.

"We turn off here," said North, as they reached the opening that led down to the *châlets*.

Miss Falkland beheld a green slope descending abruptly; the opposite slope was still steeper, and was covered with trees, a rounded green summit pushed through them. They went down; at the bottom lay the bed of the Salèce, but the river itself was so shrunken that it scarcely deserved the name of a stream. They crossed it dryshod, and began to mount between the trees. A shady coolness reigned here.

"Oh, it's steep! I never walked in such a wood as this in my life," said Miss Falkland.

"I hope you don't mind it," said North anxiously.

"Mind it? Why, it's delightful! It will be a day I shall remember as long as I live, even

if it were only for the road and this—and the raspberries."

North remembered that during his absence Mrs. Madden and her daughters had come up to Annaveyaz, and had found everything disappointing. They mounted, drawing quicker breaths, and speaking fewer words. At last they came out on a green hillside; the turf was short, and the brown earth broke through like the elbow of a beggar-boy through his jacket. The sun shone full, but a fresh, fluttering air was astir—the renowned and wholesome air of Annaveyaz. In another few minutes they had come to the summit, and saw before them, across a little mound, the line of gabled roofs. Here Miss Falkland found at her feet the five-rayed star of the smaller gentian, blue as the ultramarines of some early Italian painter. Again on the edge of the little stream, lying hidden between them and the village, there were lilac gentians growing in tufts. These, however, had not the good fortune to find equal favour in Miss Falkland's eyes; they were not honoured, like the blue ones, with a place in her belt.

When they had crossed the rivulet, and come up on its other bank, they beheld the village of Annaveyaz at full length, and Miss Falkland at once received an impression of familiarity.

"What is it so like?" said she musingly; and then, with a lively smile of recognition, "It is like a child's village on a green table—it only wants the stiff little trees."

In truth, Annaveyaz, the modern *alpe*, the pride of Salex, the most fascinating of milking villages, does present very much the appearance of having issued from a wooden toy-box, and been set up by a child on a table. But, perhaps, since we all retain a tender recollection of our playthings, Annaveyaz pleases none the less for that. Their ears were greeted by a gentle but manifold tinkling of bells; cattle were grazing between the even rows of *châlets* and in the space before the village, and in the space behind. Sprightly little goats were skipping hither and thither, or resting in graceful postures that seemed to have been carefully chosen. The cattle and the goats surveyed the new-comers with tranquil interest, but

neither man nor woman came forth to observe them. North was relieved to find that Miss Falkland betrayed no alarm in the presence of the four-footed company.

"It looks like some village in the *Arabian Nights*, where all the inhabitants had been turned into animals," she remarked.

"I hope the bread and cheese remain," said North. "For my part, I'm hungry."

"Hungry? I had not thought of that, but I believe I am hungry, too," returned Miss Falkland. "Do you think we shall have to milk a cow for ourselves? I did milk one once, but it was long ago, when I was a little girl."

"I hope we shall not be driven to that extremity. Let us go up and see whether my old acquaintance is still at the *châlet* where we slept. They told me in Salex yesterday that he was up here."

They went to a *châlet*, and in answer to North's call, a stalwart Salécien appeared, who, like many of his fellow-townsmen, united the blue-grey eyes of a northern race with the square jaw, well-cut features, and warm colour-

ing of an Italian. He greeted North with a pleased smile of recognition, and while they talked Miss Falkland had time to observe him. He wore a black close cap, and a blue jacket open at the throat, and having sleeves which were short and puffed like a child's, so that his muscular and sunburnt arms were left bare to above the elbow. Thus attired he was a model who would have been hailed with joy by the students of any London art-school. He announced, regretfully, in answer to their inquiries, that he had no milk, and that possibly they might not be able to get any—a state of things not very unusual in milking villages where the milk is put into process of manufacture at once, and is thereafter regarded no longer as milk, but as incipient cheese. At a large brown *châlet*, however, which was adorned with a motto and initials, and the date 1825, they found a youth who promised them milk. They sat down in the balcony, and a little wooden *baquet*, neatly made in alternate stripes of light and dark wood, was brought to them. On the rim of this the lad hung a couple of wooden spoons with short curved handles, and

very large, deep bowls. Miss Falkland's eyes opened a little, and she turned an inquiring glance upon her companion.

"Yes, he means us to drink it out of the bowl, each with our own spoon," said North. "But would you rather have a cup? I know there are some at the other *châlet*."

"Oh, no, no, thank you! I think this is delightful—if you don't mind. And what a charming little tub!"

She took one of the ladles and cautiously dipped out a draught of milk, which she tasted with an air of relish.

"Oh, what good milk! This is what we call cream, lower down."

Bread was now brought them in a quoit-shaped loaf, from which North cut slices with his pocket-knife. This primitive meal they took slowly and with enjoyment. Miss Falkland seemed to find keen pleasure in everything, and her eyes laughed over her wooden ladle as she looked at her comrade emptying his.

"Do you know," said North, "that you are probably the only representative of your sex in the whole of Annaveyaz?"

"Really? Are there never any women in these villages?"

"In the others that I have known I have generally found one, who kept a little *café*—and ruled the settlement. But here there is neither *café* nor woman, as far as I know. But two ladies, English or American, I am not sure which, stayed up here for three weeks last summer."

"Did they? How delightful for them! What a rest! I would give a good deal to be able to stay three weeks in Annaveyaz."

"And cook your own dinner?"

"Oh, yes; and churn and milk, and scrub too. I can't do any of these things, you know, but I should like to."

"Your ideal of happiness is modest," said North.

"Yes," she answered a little sadly, "it is very modest. I should like to work hard for my living in everybody's sight, and be as poor as you please, only openly, and with no pretence about it. I should like to want nothing from anybody, except fair pay for fair work, and instead of that——" She let her sentence close

in silence, but presently resumed in a lighter tone, "And instead of that, you see, I lead a sophisticated life, in which I neither scrub nor cook, and know that if I mean to be wise, I must never own to being poor." She lifted her wooden spoon to her mouth, and took a long, cautious draught. "What would all the hotel people say if they could see us taking this frugal refreshment, and know that we liked it? You *do* like it, don't you, Mr. North?"

"I like it very much indeed."

"How they would scorn such humble tastes! But, dear me, how funny it is that we can't all be contented to drink milk out of wooden spoons and eat brown bread! Life would be so simple. But I wonder—should you think there are many social differences in Annaveyaz? Does the upper cowman cut the under cowman, and do the goats refuse to know the pigs?"

"I have no doubt of it."

"Then the world is altogether a valley of delusions, and I give it up. But let us think for to-day, at least, that it is not so, and that in Annaveyaz every one works honestly, and nobody pretends to be better than the rest, and

nobody looks down on his neighbour. And we will forget that there is any world outside at all. Don't you feel it all vanishing away—Oxford, and Paris, and the Hotel des Alpes Vaudoises, and all the people in it? For to-day, all that has ceased to be. There's no sea, and no England, and no money, and no Society; and we may say what we like, because to-day we are in fairyland, and to-morrow we shall go away, and never see one another again."

"To-morrow?"

"So to speak, to-morrow. This milk is intoxicating, Mr. North; it makes me talk nonsense. But really, and in good earnest, you can't guess what a relief it is to me to be up here in freedom like this, and with some one to whom I can speak freely, just because——" She grew red, stopped short, and apologised.

"I beg your pardon, I was going to say something very rude."

"'Just because' I am so insignificant?" said North, smiling.

"I did not mean exactly that, but I am afraid I can't express exactly what I did mean; and, indeed, it is not at all worth while. But

really though you might not have understood it so, it was a compliment."

North thought that he understood pretty clearly. He was a poor man, dependent chiefly upon his fellowship, not likely to regard himself, or be regarded by others, as a possible object of matrimonial designs.

"Oh, yes," said he, returning to the main theme of her speech, "it all looks very charming to us; but I have no doubt that there are jealousies, and pretences, and meannesses even in Annaveyaz."

"Oh, yes, no doubt; but the general scheme of life is wholesome and genuine. And with us it is the other way."

He understood to-day that the "us" was not to be applied universally, and refrained from contradiction. Since he could not alter her life for her, it seemed to him the kindest thing to keep her attention engaged for the time in other tracks.

Their meal was finished now. They left the hospitable *châlet*, and came down into what Miss Falkland called the street. Here she began to make friends with the animals. There

was a mild, white and black bull, with a fringe of woolly curls between the horns, whom she stroked and patted, and who blinked with satisfaction under her caresses. Then the goats came round, daintily and inquisitively; one little, white nanny-goat laid her pretty head in the tenderest manner against Miss Falkland's arm. She smiled and was delighted. She went from one to another of the animals, who received her advances for the most part tranquilly, but sometimes with evident pleasure. Only the brown and hairy pigs she could not bring herself to touch. She became radiant; the ready acceptance yielded by these uncritical fellow-creatures gave her a joy by the height of which North could guess the depth of the wounds which she had received from the non-acceptance of men and women. He felt himself sink into quite a secondary place, but he was a modest person, and was satisfied by the reflection that it was a mark of confidence to be allowed to witness her gladness.

They went on a little, and sat down on the green slope behind the village; shut in at their backs by those walls of rock, where a young

countryman of theirs lost his life a year or two earlier, and beholding in front a long view of mountain and valley, wood and brown-roofed cottage, all bright and clear under a cloudless sky. Here they were presently approached by two little boys, round, brown-cheeked urchins, with laughing eyes under their basin-shaped felt hats, and with woolly stems of edelweiss held out for sale in their sturdy fists. The edelweiss grows here, some thirty feet overhead, on a tiny shelf from which the cliff curves inward; an inaccessible spot to English eyes, if ever there was one. Yet these chubby mountain imps, of whom the elder appeared about eight years old, had been up to fetch it when they saw strangers arrive, and were ready to go up again on the slightest encouragement. North and Miss Falkland, however, having the nerves of the city-bred, were by no means anxious for a repetition of the performance. Miss Falkland bought the little twigs of edelweiss, which she put into her belt beside the gentian, and enticed the youngsters into conversation. In a few minutes a little Annaveyazan was sitting on each side of her,

and she knew their names, their ages, and their course of study in school.

"You must be very much accustomed to children," said North to her, when they were again on their way down to lower levels. This idea had come into his mind as a great surprise, but yet as an indisputable conclusion on seeing her in their society.

"No, not at all," she answered. "I hardly know any child; but they seem to know that I am fond of them."

They came to the stream that runs in a deep furrow in front of the village. She paused and turned back, and looked regretfully at the little settlement.

"Good-bye, Annaveyaz, good-bye," said she softly. "When shall I ever see you again?"

She turned a little abruptly, and began to descend the steep bank. North almost fancied that her eyes were moist. They crossed over and went on in silence, he respecting her mood, and waiting for her to speak. She presently looked up at him, and said in a tone of genuine cordiality that gladdened him in the very depth of his shy and self-distrustful soul,

"You know, Mr. North, you have given me one of the best days I have ever known in my life."

It was now his turn to be, for an instant, too much moved for speech. Poor girl! Poor child! One of the best days she had ever known in her life—a mere day of tranquillity, and silence, and open sunshine!

They came down by the road to Salex, that road which in many parts is made laboriously ("*Vous savez, on est si laborieux à Salex*") of rough-hewn logs, laid now athwart, now lengthwise. It goes down and down, crossing patches of marsh, where the loose-haired cotton-grass still lingered, dipping into woods, and emerging again, a high isthmus between two deep valleys. All along it, here and there, are *châlets*, well kept and well built, but all now empty; cattle and men alike had gone up higher. They came out at last by the wood through which the Salèce runs, on the straight road from Salex to the Hotel des Alpes Vaudoises. It was getting late in the afternoon by this time; Miss Falkland, who was not probably accustomed to walks of fifteen miles over hill and dale, was beginning

to be a little tired. North had been asking himself whether at this point he should not withdraw himself and return alone to the hotel, and had just decided that he would go with her as far as the next village, when, at the turn of the road, they came face to face with two other pedestrians—Frank and Eleanor. North would rather, just then, have met a couple of bandits, but he bore himself well, and betrayed neither surprise nor discomposure. He bowed to Eleanor; she barely acknowledged the salute, and suffered an expression of ironical astonishment to show itself in her face; Frank, with an ill-stifled look of amusement, lifted his hat, and Miss Falkland, tranquil and self-controlled as ever, walked on entirely undisturbed. After that meeting North would have died rather than depart unbidden before they had reached the door of the hotel. And as Miss Falkland gave utterance to no such bidding, they walked on quietly side by side, passed two more of the hotel inmates on their road, and in due time advanced together across the hotel garden, and entered together by the principal door.

And in the passage, a little dark after the bright light outside, they were met by Captain Falkland, who greeted his daughter thus: "Oh, here you are at last! Where have you been all the afternoon?"

It was not easy in the shadow to distinguish Miss Falkland's face.

She answered calmly, "I have been to Annaveyaz. Have you been back long?"

Her voice sounded to North a little more precise and constrained than before; but the difference, if indeed it existed, was but the finest of shades. He himself went away to his room, feeling as if he had descended from a world of peace and harmony into a world of discord.

Captain Falkland followed his daughter to her room—they had not, like the Maddens, a private sitting-room—and there demanded of her: "How did you come to be with that fellow?"

"I wanted to go up to Annaveyaz, and Mr. North offered to show me the way."

"Then you have been with him all the afternoon?"

"Yes."

"Are you mad?" broke out her father with an oath. "Don't you know that every soul in this gossiping place will be talking about you?"

She said nothing.

"What do you mean by it—eh?"

"I thought I might take a holiday for one day."

"Take a holiday! Why, what do you ever do, I should like to know, except make holiday? You don't sew, or scrub, or cook. You don't keep house; you have nothing in the world to do but to look after your own interests. And you are so perverse that you go wasting your time on such a fellow as that. What do you suppose the d'Yverdonnes will think of you?"

"I don't suppose they think of me at all."

"You should make them think of you. Those are people worth knowing; it would be a passport for you, in France, to have stayed with Madame d'Yverdonne. Have you tried to make yourself agreeable to her?"

"Father, I can't! Really I can't. Mrs.

Madden has talked to them. You should see how she looks at me."

"Pooh! pooh! Looks at you! Didn't I tell you before I went away that you were to cultivate the d'Yverdonnes?"

Miss Falkland looked down, rather guiltily.

"It is no use, father—really it is no use. I should only be making myself a laughing-stock."

"That's for me to decide. You do what you are told."

He walked to and fro in the room.

"I can't understand you—upon my word I can't. Look here, Constance, give me a plain answer: Is there any love nonsense between you and North?"

Miss Falkland coloured a very little, and replied, with a faint smile that had a touch both of sadness and bitterness in it: "Oh, dear no! Mr. North never had such a notion in his head."

"Then I give it up. It would be odd enough if you had taken a fancy to that cut-and-dried prig, except that women will do anything. But if there is nothing of that sort, I repeat again—Why on earth did you go?"

"Because I wanted to be free and left alone, and not looked down upon, for one day; and I knew—at least I thought, and I thought right—that Mr. North would treat me as if I were his equal."

She stood up as she spoke, and threw off her hat. Her father looked at her curiously.

"You do fancy the cut-and-dried prig then, after all?" said he.

She turned and faced him coldly. "You are very much mistaken. My feelings for Mr. North are not in the least of that kind. Am I such an idiot, do you suppose, as to imagine that a man of that sort would dream of marrying me? I like his society; he is that very, very rare thing, a man with a sense of chivalry; he is sorry for me because people look down on me, but he makes one feel it, not as an insult, but a comfort. Oh, I know very well that it is all compassion; I, as a person, am probably offensive to all his tastes —I understand that. And at my age that is not the sort of feeling that inclines one to 'fancy,' as you say, a man."

Her tone had grown weary by the time she

finished. She was thankful beyond words for the clangour of the great bell, which called her to dress for dinner, and dismissed her father from her room. She let herself drop into the chair from which she had risen, and gave herself the luxury of five minutes' repose.

Tears—not the tears that fall, but the bitterer tears that remain—gathered in her eyes ; a weight of irremovable melancholy was upon her. She let fall her hand, and the stems of edelweiss brushed it softly as it fell. She took them out, looked at them regretfully, and pressed them with a sudden caress against her cheek. Her father, if he could have seen the action, would have been sure that she had spoken falsely when she denied any fancy for the companion of her walk. But he would have been mistaken, as men and women mostly are, when they interpret one another's tokens of emotion. Miss Falkland's longings and regrets were not for North, but for Annaveyaz, for peace and freedom, and a life of honest work.

Curious looks met her when she came into the dining-room, but she betrayed neither

embarrassment nor consciousness. About halfway through the meal there was a little stir, as the unexpected figure of Mr. Lancaster made its appearance on the threshold. This young gentleman's looks had undergone a visible change in these three days. He looked haggard, yet he was flushed, and there was a doggedness about the set of his mouth, an angry glare about his eyes that, to North's mind, foreboded mischief. Captain Falkland had to-day interposed himself between his daughter and North, and North saw him grow pale, and set down his glass untouched.

"Is Lancaster going to make a scene?" thought he, and prepared himself for intervention. Lancaster, however, placed himself opposite to Miss Falkland, and, without any greeting to her father, began pointedly to talk to her.

"It *is* to-night that there's the dance, isn't it, Miss Falkland?"

"Oh, yes."

"That's right. I came back on purpose. You know you promised me one waltz, at least."

Mr. Lancaster's entrance had excited a little

general curiosity, and momentarily interrupted the many minor conversations; now, in the comparative silence, his loud voice made every one aware that Miss Falkland had promised him one waltz, at least.

Miss Falkland did not go to the dancing-room directly after dinner, nor did she, as most people did, every evening, wander out into the garden. North, coming down from his room with a letter for the post, met her on the staircase.

"I hope you are not feeling too much tired from your walk?" said he.

"Oh, no," she answered. "I shall come down and dance presently."

He went out and found Frank pacing the gravel walk, and perfuming the evening air with his cigar.

"Going to the post?" said Frank.

North said "Yes," and his friend joined him.

"I wonder what's the matter with Lancaster," said Frank, as they passed out of the garden into the high road. "He looks like a man set on making a row."

"Oh, Lancaster!" answered North, con-

temptuously. "What's the use of speculating about a cad like Lancaster? He has thrown away money in some folly, and comes back to vent his ill-humour here, I suppose."

"I should not wonder," said Frank, nodding his head sagely, "if he has heard of your walk with a certain lady this afternoon, and is in a fury about it. Oh, she's a clever girl! It is a lucky thing for you that you are not big game enough for her. You would not have a chance against her."

North kept silence, which is the next best thing to keeping one's temper.

Frank went on meditatively: "I *was* staggered to see you walking together in that wood. What odds will you take that she is engaged to Lancaster before to-morrow morning?"

Again North made no reply.

Frank resumed slowly: "They are an awfully interesting study, those Falklands. It is as good as a comedy to see them at their little game. If only she was as pretty as she is clever, she would have been settled long ago."

"Look here, Frank," broke out North,

standing still in the road, "doesn't it strike you as rather a brutal sort of thing for us to be always discussing a girl in this way? It seems to me that the very fact of her doubtful sort of position ought to make us more—I don't know how—more respectful, more ready to think the best of her."

"Oh, well," said Frank, lightly enough, "you know, you take it too seriously. I don't mean any harm to her, poor soul. But really it does seem to me nonsense if one may not speak of one's neighbours."

North said no more; he contented himself with recognising, finally, once and for all, the fact that his companion of to-day was no longer his friend of three years back. Yet for the old comradeship's sake, there was pleasure as well as pain in walking in step, up and down these hotel walks, beside the man who had so many times kept pace with him along the walks of his college; and they lingered side by side, feeling a certain ease, even if they felt no especial pleasure, in each other's society.

The plaintive, seductive notes of a waltz tune floated out from the dancing-room.

"I must go in: Nelly will be waiting for me," said Frank, casting away the end of his second cigar.

North, whose natural tendency was always to do what others did, went in with him though he had no intention of dancing. A lady from Geneva was at the piano, a young Englishman had taken his violin, and was accompanying. The voice of the violin was like a cry of emotion, of complaint, of tremulous hopes and fears, that melted into one another.

North presently saw Miss Falkland come in. She had not made two steps before she was claimed for the dance, and she had not yet started when another partner was begging for the next. Clearly Miss Falkland had at least one empire in which she reigned easily. And North, though not learned in details of dancing, could see that she deserved her supremacy. She moved easily, gracefully, and in perfect harmony with the music, she was neither stiff nor over-vehement. Even Eleanor Madden allowed that she danced like a lady. But her face showed none of the elation, the radiance

that shines in the faces of the skilful in bodily exercises. Mr. Lancaster meanwhile stood in a corner, and glared at her with angry eyes. North, when he saw him, remembered Frank's prophecy, and caught himself sighing. He stood a while looking on, and letting his thoughts float idly at the guidance of the music; but the spectacle of other people dancing is one that inclines to melancholy, and presently his melancholy drove him forth into the solitude and darkness of the garden. The throbbing music came after him; the moon was beginning to rise; the trees cast long shadows, there were lakes of faint light, and caverns of misty gloom; everything was still, except for the pulse of the music. Vague hopes, vague longings, vague regrets rose in his heart as he paced slowly to and fro. He felt himself extremely solitary, and his solitude seemed to him mournful. He was not at all accustomed to meditate thus about himself; in general, he was too much occupied with the business in hand, or with considerations on behalf of his neighbours, to have much time for such speculations. But in this idle hotel-life, where he

found himself in the midst of so many people—among, yet not of them—he had begun to recognise that he was very much isolated indeed. It seemed to him too late to rectify that loneliness; he was, in truth, a young man still, but he had ceased to think of himself as young. Other men might form ties—Frank might marry, even Lancaster might marry, but for him it was out of his line. He had always been of a recluse and cloistered temper; even at school the boys had called him "the hermit." He had accepted the name quite readily, but now, when he remembered it, it weighed upon him. Yes, a hermit; nature makes hermits sometimes, and men make cells for them in the shape of college fellowships. He was quite in his right place, North thought, a modest corner, where he worked unassumingly, and asked nothing of the great outer world. Yet at intervals the general longings would arise, and North would feel, like another man, the desire to see wife and child at his fireside. But it was a vague, impersonal desire; there were no outlines to the picture; the wife had no one woman's face and voice, and the hearth

no local habitation. His pensive pacings came to an end; he stood leaning on the balustrade looking out over the valley. He stood some time; the music had paused and begun again; the moon had gone higher and higher up the sky, and the shadow of the tree behind had gradually crept over him. He stood forgetful, musing, observing, yet hardly knowing that he observed, the slow development of the landscape under the rising moon; he was aroused by the approach of steps and voices. The first voice was a man's; its words escaped him. The second was a woman's; he heard her words distinctly.

"I have told you twice, three times, that it can't be."

North felt a sudden throb and tumult in his breast. The voice was Miss Falkland's.

"You would not have said that, three days ago," said the man's voice. (Yes, it was Lancaster.) "Your father has told you to have nothing to say to me, now. And do you know why? Do you know whose doing it is that I am not worth your taking?"

He spoke violently, he seemed going on;

she interrupted. Neither of them saw North in the shadow.

"My father has said nothing to me. Money has nothing to do with it—nothing at all."

Lancaster laughed, a loud, insulting laugh. North controlled himself and stood still, feeling that to interfere would be even worse than to overhear. He could see them now. Miss Falkland had paused and turned as if to go back. Lancaster placed himself before her; she remained standing still.

"You think you can play with me and throw me away, but you are mistaken. I am not going to be taken up and put down just as it suits you and your father. You encouraged me, you know you did; you gave me every right to think you cared for me; but I thought better of it, and I went away. Why did your father come after me? He knew I wanted to get away from him. But ——" with an oath, "if he has cheated me I'll be even with him, and through you. I'll make it the worse for him if you don't say 'yes' to me."

"Are you mad, Mr. Lancaster, to speak to me in this way? I tell you plainly, once more,

nothing on earth would induce me to be your wife. Let me pass, if you please."

But Lancaster still barred her passage. North, stepping out of the shadows, took him by the arm and said quietly, "Come, Lancaster, you are forgetting yourself."

Miss Falkland uttered a cry. Lancaster started back, then recovering himself, demanded, in language more forcible than elegant, what he meant by interfering.

"Come, come," said North tranquilly, "there's no need to make a row. You come with me, and let Miss Falkland go, if she pleases."

Lancaster broke out into threats, and drew nearer to his adversary with a blustering air of menace. It appeared to North that his patience had now lasted long enough. He seized the young man by the two shoulders and flung him backwards among the flowers and bushes. The attack was unexpected. Lancaster fell at full length. Miss Falkland remained standing still, until North, drawing her arm into his, walked with her towards the house. She was trembling from head to foot. They had scarcely

turned the corner of the path when a sob broke from her. What should he do? He shrank from exposing her tears to the first comer in the brilliantly lighted entry. At the end of a diverging alley there was a thick arbour. Lancaster would assuredly not seek her there. He struck into this dark walk, and led her to the arbour. She sank down upon the bench and wept vehemently.

"Don't, don't!" said North in great concern. "You must not distress yourself. He was not sober; he did not know what he was saying."

"It's not that! It's not that!" sobbed she.

Then, by a great effort, she checked her tears. She stood up; she turned away; she turned back. She seemed hardly able to control her voice enough for speech. Then she said, "You don't believe him, do you? You don't—don't think I ever gave him any reason to speak so?"

"No woman ever gave any man reason to speak so," North replied indignantly. "And as to Mr. Lancaster, I have known him far too long to pay any regard to anything he may say

even when he is sober. Think no more about it. He is not worth remembering."

"Thank you," said she. She paused there; then, "If I had been anybody different," said she, hesitating, "it would not have mattered. But if one is poor, and—and in a sort of way unprotected, people seem to think that one is a different sort of creature. I have got not to care—it doesn't matter what they think; and I daresay it is my own fault. But, indeed, I never deserved to be spoken to like that."

"I am sure of it," said North, with more fervour than his cooler reason could perhaps have justified.

"Thank you, again," said she. "Thank you for everything. Good-night."

She gave him her hand, and vanished among the trees.

It was a little late when Miss Falkland came down to breakfast next morning, and she found the room but thinly peopled. Her father had not yet appeared; Lancaster was probably in the same case. The Maddens always breakfasted in their own sitting-room, and neither Frank Conway nor North was to be seen.

She concluded that they had already finished their meal. But presently Frank Conway came in, and asked for another cup of coffee. The English chaplain, who was slowly reading a long letter while he ate his breakfast, looked up and asked, "Have you seen the poor fellow off?"

"Yes, I have seen him off. But as to 'poor fellow'——" He shrugged his shoulders. "I suppose he will come into about five thousand a year."

"In—deed! A Hampshire family, I think? I fancy I must have met the brother once in Winchester."

"I don't much fancy he is a great loss to the family."

"Who is that," asked another Englishman at some little distance, "who has lost a brother and come into five thousand a year?"

"North," answered Frank, and as he answered, he glanced across at Miss Falkland.

But Miss Falkland had lived the life of vicissitudes in hotels too long to betray any emotion at the departure of an acquaintance so recently made, and Frank's curiosity gained nothing.

Captain Falkland, when he heard this news, bestowed a few curses upon his fate, and wished he had known a little sooner that North's brother was about to break his neck. Frank Conway regretted his friend for a day or two; the Maddens felt an unspoken, but sincere relief; Miss Falkland missed a supporting presence, and no one else was conscious of any change. Mr. Lancaster, having failed in that purpose which had brought him back, once more departed from the Hotel des Alpes Vaudoises. The d'Yverdonnes, the Maddens, the Falklands, followed in due course; the green shutters were closed up; the red flag was taken down, and the birds of passage left their nest to be a plaything for the winter snows and winds until next year.

II.

Miss Falkland was sitting in the balcony of a little *salon*, looking out over a blue lake. It was still warm down here in the plain, and the grapes on the balcony were deepening from purple to black. Her father had gone

out after his late breakfast, and she was alone and tranquil. Downstairs one of the ladies of the *pension* was industriously practising a popular waltz; and from half-hour to half-hour the hoarse whistle and clanging bell of a steamer came to her ears. She was darning her father's socks; the occupation had a soothing monotony, and her face was calm almost to the point of serenity.

A bell rang below in the house, and a little girl came up with a letter. Miss Falkland took it and looked at it with some surprise. It was an English letter, and the writing was unknown to her. She opened it, saw the address of a London hotel, and wondering, read thus:—

"My dear Miss Falkland,—When I parted from you six weeks ago I had not an opportunity of even saying 'good-bye' to you, much less of saying what more I wished to say. And now I am detained in England by my poor brother's affairs for at least another month or two, so that I am compelled to write when I would infinitely rather speak to you

face to face. I think you will hardly be surprised when I tell you that since that happy day at Annaveyaz it has been my strongest desire to gain your affections. My position then would have enabled me only to offer you a share of my own poverty, and I hesitated; but now things are changed with me, and I venture to speak plainly. Can you, and will you, give me the hope of calling you my wife? I am not, as you know, an eloquent man; I do not know how to put my petition persuasively; I can only tell you that if you grant it you will make me infinitely happy, and that to make you happy would be my dearest hope and delight. But whether you answer me according to my hopes, or according to my fears, I am, and shall be always,

"Your entirely devoted

"ARTHUR NORTH."

Miss Falkland laid the letter down in her lap; her lips were trembling; tears came slowly to her eyes. A vast sense of gratitude, of release, of exaltation in her own esteem took possession of her. The one man

whose respect she had learned to value, from whose disapproval she would have shrunk, whose approbation seemed an unattainable treasure, had chosen her by preference out of all the women of the world. She had told her father truly that she had no "fancy" for North, because she had believed herself inevitably indifferent in his eyes. But now—now! She had scarcely learned that he loved her before an answering love sprang up and at once overshadowed the world. Words seemed altogether inadequate to this new and wonderful emotion; nothing but music could come near to expressing it.

She thought, at first, nothing of the tranquil, dignified life that was opening before her. To be loved and chosen by him who had chosen her was enough. She longed with eager ardour to see him, to try and tell him what she felt; the barrier of distance was insupportable. To think that it must be three days before the answer that was throbbing in her heart could get to him! She did not rise hastily to write the answer, but leaned back in her long chair, and closed her eyes,

supremely, serenely, fearlessly happy. She heard her father's step, rose up, and went from the balcony into the room.

"Father," said she, "I have had a letter from Mr. North; he wants me to marry him."

Captain Falkland, who was just taking off his straw hat, flung it up to the ceiling like a schoolboy. "You don't say so?" cried he. "This is the best news I have heard for many a day. I congratulate you, my dear, I congratulate you. Ah, Constance, Constance, and you told me there was nothing of the kind! You hypocrite, you!"

"Indeed, father, I thought so; I never was more astonished in my life."

"Well, I am not astonished a bit. He is a sensible man. And an uncommonly gentlemanly man, too, Constance; worth fifty of that young jackanapes Conway, that the Maddens thought so much of. What a pity the Maddens aren't here to hear of it—eh, Constance?"

Constance did not respond; she was in a world where the Maddens had no place.

"Have you written back?"

"No, I am going to write now."

"Is that the letter?"

"Yes."

He held out his hand for it, but she shook her head, colouring a little.

"No, father. I could not let any one see that letter."

Her father broke out into laughter, and she went away, abashed, with her letter. This letter had altered her whole outward self. She was no longer the perfectly self-controlled Miss Falkland of the hotel. Her face was softened, it changed responsively at every word, almost at every breath; her calm and steady eyes were dewy, the lids rose and fell; a doubtful smile hovered about her mouth; she looked five years younger than the Constance whom her father had left when he went out.

This was the letter which she wrote to North:—

"My dear Mr. North,—Your letter surprised me very much indeed. I had never dreamed for a moment that you felt any-

thing for me except a sort of compassion. I feel it almost too wonderful to be true that you should feel for me like that; I feel it to be the greatest honour that could possibly be given me, and the greatest happiness too. To speak with complete sincerity, I do not know that I can say yet that I love you—the thought has come to me too suddenly and too unexpectedly—but I may say that I know I shall. Ever since I have known you, you have stood in quite a special place in my thoughts. I cared for your opinion as I have very seldom cared for anybody's; and it used sometimes to hurt me more than I can say when I thought that, after all, you probably thought as little of me as all the others in the hotel did. Only one thing I must ask you, and I do ask it most earnestly It is that if, when you see more of me, you are disappointed in me (and indeed I think it is not unlikely, for you know me very little, and I know I am not fit for you) you must promise to tell me openly, and let us part. I could not bear to live if I thought that you had to be always bearing with me. But

if you promise me that, I shall be easy, because I know I may trust to you entirely. Oh, how I wish I could see you, but don't hurry your business because of that. My father is delighted. His pleasure is partly, I know, in the thought that you are rich. I need not say, to you, that this thought makes no difference to me; *you* would never think it did. I will not even consider it enough to wish that I might have proved it to you six weeks ago. A sort of shock comes over me in looking back on those six weeks, and thinking that I am actually writing like this to you. I am half inclined to tear up this letter and write another, but I will not. Such as it is, you shall have it, because it is the first and immediate expression of my real feelings; only it does not express them, they cannot be expressed. I can only say—and oh! with what a different meaning from the words as we write them generally—that I am,

"Yours always,

"CONSTANCE FALKLAND."

When she came down to dinner, Miss

Falkland perceived that her father had already spread abroad the news. There was a little flutter among the boarders at her entrance; everybody looked at her, and the mistress of the house served her to the most delicate morsels, as if she had been a distinguished guest. Her father was all smiles and gaiety, and his manner to her had an infusion of something like respect. Everything conspired to make clear to her that it was not in her own eyes only that North's wooing exalted her. After dinner, when she and her father were together, he talked with enjoyment of the prospects before her, the house, the lands, the income that would be hers. The solid virtues of North had assumed great value in his eyes; he rejoiced in the thought that these possessions would never be endangered by riotous living. At last he went out, no doubt to communicate to a wider circle the news that his daughter was going to marry a wealthy man. Miss Falkland, left alone, was beginning to abandon herself to the vague and delicious dreamings of which the new-betrothed know no limit, when a discreet knock sounded on her

door, and in answer to her "Come in," Mrs. Vanner, an American, boarding in the house, presented herself.

"I really had to come up," said she. "I am so interested; and I could not help thinking you would like to hear a congratulation in your own language."

"You are very kind," said Miss Falkland, rather astonished. She had risen when her visitor appeared, and was standing opposite her. The other, drawing a chair, sat down composedly.

"And he is really so rich, and such a fine family?"

"I don't know anything about those points."

"Oh, dear! how romantic! Well, now, when I was married, I knew to a dollar what my husband had. But what I really came for was to ask to see his photograph."

"I have not got it."

"Oh, dear, how funny! But of course you'll have it, and then you must show it me the first thing, won't you? And I suppose you'll be sending to Paris for your things. Now I was just going to tell you I know quite the best

place for style *and* price in Paris. I always have my own things from there, and I'll write to the people, if you like, and tell them to take particular care about you."

"Thank you, very much; but things are not so far advanced as that, yet."

"Well, any way, I thought I would come and tell you, because, you know, you might have written to some one else first, and I'm sure you would have regretted it. Oh, dear! I believe here's madame on the stairs; I knew she would not be long before she came to bother you. She's just as inquisitive as she can live. Well, I shall take myself off. Mind you come to me for that address."

She departed, her bracelets jingling, and her high heels tapping on the uncarpeted floor. Now appeared Madame Marchand, the mistress of the house, a little out of breath with having mounted the stairs, and far more deferential than Mrs. Vanner.

She had come to present her felicitations to mademoiselle. She was so grieved at the idea of losing M. le Capitaine and mademoiselle, but, at least, she hoped that they would not leave

just yet. Perhaps M. le *fiancé* would come out to Switzerland for the wedding. That, Madame Marchand opined, would have a charming fitness, since the lovers had met in Switzerland—at Villières, was it not?

"Yes, at Villières," answered Miss Falkland. She could not but remember how there had been recriminations, the day before yesterday, about her father's tardy payments; and Madame Marchand's friendliness made her sad and cynical. She could not bring herself to answer otherwise than coldly, and madame, when she went down again, agreed with Mrs. Vanner that Miss Falkland was extremely puffed up by her new dignity, and that Mr. North was a person much to be pitied.

Miss Falkland herself returned with renewed ardour, after these two visits, to the contemplation of North's simplicity and sincerity. Life had not offered a very noble spectacle to her; she had taught herself never to expect a high moral standard from her fellow-creatures, but she could not cure herself of a certain home-sickness after it, and this home-sickness found its cure and its repose in North. He, at least,

had none of these pettinesses, these ignoble motives, and transparent meannesses.

It was on the fifth day that a second letter reached her. She went to read it by herself in her own room, and found a yet keener savour of happiness in these second assurances than even in the first. For the letter began with that opening which is so wonderful and so significant when it appears for the first time.

"My dearest Constance,—How am I to thank you for your sweet letter? How can I be grateful enough to you for not being chilled by that coldness of exterior which I know to be repelling, but which I cannot overcome? But you must teach me to overcome it, and, never, never, my own Constance, fall into the error of believing it more than superficial; never doubt that I love you with the whole ardour of a nature that feels deeply, however much it may fail in expression. And now for good news. I hope you will think it as good as I do. I am coming out to you, if all goes well, in ten days—that is, next Tuesday week. I hope to stay a week, and perhaps I may

persuade you and your father to return with me to England. It will then be rather more than two months since poor George's death, and I think my family will not find it indecently soon for me to introduce my promised wife to them. If my wishes are allowed to prevail, I look to March or April as a suitable time for our marriage. Do not, my dearest Constance, let me be put off beyond the end of April. You cannot conceive how impatient I am to see you ; I am carrying about a certain ring-case in my pocket, and from time to time I look into it, and regard the ring as already a part of you. In ten days from the time I write, a week from the time when you read, I shall see it on your hand. I have begun to count the days again like a schoolboy, and every day I say to myself, 'There can be no letter yet.' Write to me every day, Constance, as I shall to you. Tell me what you do, where you go, what you think—every line you write will be treasured——'

There was more, a great deal more ; there was a long description of the house where she was to dwell, and of the neighbours who would

receive her with welcome. There was also mention of a business letter written to her father, which duly arrived a post or two later, and filled that happy parent with satisfaction. It appeared that his boastful accounts of his future son-in-law's wealth were far more nearly exact than he had dared to suppose. To his daughter these points were, in sober earnest, of scarcely any moment at all. She knew that her lover was rich enough; the more or less was utterly insignificant. It was far more surprising and important to remark the wonderful revelation of character contained in such a letter as this second, and to try and fuse into one personality the Arthur who wrote "My dearest Constance," and the Mr. North who used to speak to her with formal politeness at the *table d'hôte*. It was so amazing to write "My dearest Arthur," that it was many minutes before she could advance any farther in her reply. The writing of that reply was a unique and poignant pleasure. She belonged to the race of the tongue-tied who can be expansive on paper. It is not shyness of heart which keeps these unfortunate people silent; it is not

even that they do not know what to say when they would communicate themselves; on the contrary, they often have audacities of mental eloquence which would astound many a fluent utterer of confidences; it is a maddening barrier erected by the mere fact of personal presence which silences them. From lip to ear, they cannot speak, except under pressure of some emotion strong enough to break through the barrier. But when the ear of the listener is no longer there; when they are not discomposed by the glance of an eye or the drawing of a breath; when the embarrassment of their own tones or their own change of colour no longer disturbs them, then they "drop the veil of the flesh," and reveal the true self. Face to face with her lover, Miss Falkland would probably have spoken little and with reserve, but she wrote openly and easily, with a delight in self-utterance tasted for the first time. And this delight continued for three days. Each day she wrote, pouring out all the hidden store of emotion which it had been her life's business, hitherto, to shut in. After the third day it was useless to write, because the letters would not

arrive before the departure of the traveller. She still, however, received North's letters daily; there were seven in all, before that of Tuesday morning. His letters were not, indeed, such outpourings as hers, they were a little stiff and a little cumbersome, sometimes even a little constrained, but she was amply satisfied. She saw the trustworthy face of the man behind the trifling pedantries of phrase, and heard his honest voice giving its own accent of sincerity to the words. The last of his letters reached her on the morning of the Tuesday when he should arrive, and announced that he was in the act of starting. She received it while she was putting on her hat to go down to the steamboat with her father, and she read it sitting at the entrance of the little *débarcadère* while they awaited the boat's arrival. "In an hour, perhaps in half an hour, from the time you receive this, we shall be together," said the letter. A calm radiance of perfect content stole over her face. The barrier of personal shyness did not cast its shadow before it, and she had no fears. The bluest of blue lakes stretched out before her; the hills on the other side were

blue, and the sky was blue overhead. The rippling water sparkled in the sun, the white houses gleamed, the holiday land of Switzerland had never worn its holiday face more gaily. And presently, far off upon the blue, they saw the boat drawing heavily nearer. They heard the husky screech, then the discordant and aggressive bell. They stood up. Constance was all a-tremble; the colour came and went in her face like the coming and going of breath. The boat drew in; there was the little bustle of landing, the putting across of the bridge, then the eager, pushing throng of passengers coming ashore. A mist came before her eyes; she wished it were not so soon—she dreaded the first touch, the first word. And then, as the touch and the word lingered, she was all on fire with impatience. Where was he? The stream was growing thinner. Perhaps he was delayed about luggage. The fresh passengers were being admitted. Was it possible—oh, was it possible that he was not here? She felt tears rising in her throat.

"But where's North? I can't make it out," said her father angrily.

And leaving her side, he joined the throng who were elbowing their way on board. He returned in a couple of minutes.

"He is not there. He did not come. He must have missed the boat."

His daughter could not answer. She had fought down the rising tears, and attained a calm face, but speech was still beyond her.

For once in her life her father gave her consolation.

"No doubt the trains were late. I expect he is in a rage. Shall we take the next boat and go to meet him?"

"Oh, father! But perhaps he will come by train."

"Ah, to be sure, perhaps he will. There is a train in half an hour. We will just walk slowly up to the *gare*."

They walked to the station, where they learned that the Paris and Lausanne train of the night before had assuredly met with no accident.

"Oh, he will be here directly," said Captain Falkland, in a tone of cheerful conviction, and his daughter was somewhat comforted.

The train arrived. Englishmen in plenty descended, but Arthur North was not among them. The sense of foiled endeavour that haunts a bad dream began to creep blankly over Miss Falkland.

"Oh, well, we won't despair yet. We'll go back to the landing stage," said her father. "I'll just get a glass of brandy and water at the buffet, and we'll go down."

They retraced their steps. Again the blue lake sparkled before them; again the blue hills softly closed in the horizon. Again a steamer shouldered its way through the water; again their eyes were strained for a sign of greeting. Once more the pulses of a panting monster beat against the pier, and the stream of hurrying people pushed across the drawbridge. And again Constance's tremulous hope was quenched in the now familiar disappointment. The old sense of humiliation, of loneliness and neglect, was at her heart. She had no disposition now to weep. She became pale and silent, and called on the old stoicism. Her father was angry, and, as usual, somewhat intemperate in the expression of his anger. She

made no protest, but walked back mutely beside him to the *pension*.

Mrs. Vanner was sitting in the garden with two other boarders; Madame Marchand was on a balcony; everybody was anxious for the first view of Miss Falkland's lover. Blankness fell upon them.

"What, all alone, Miss Falkland?" said Mrs. Vanner, in her high tones.

Captain Falkland gave her an evil look, and growled something under his moustache, but his daughter answered quietly, "Yes, we are all alone, as you see. I hope it is not a very great disappointment to you."

She went into the house, without hastening her pace, and going to her own room sat down and remained motionless, with her hands clasped upon her knee, and a look of oppression and vain longing upon her face. It was just thus that she had caught North's attention as she sat in the garden of the Hôtel des Alpes Vaudoises.

It was not till late in the afternoon that any explanation arrived. About half-past four a telegraph messenger was seen approaching.

Mrs. Vanner took the despatch from him and ran upstairs. Captain Falkland was alone in the sitting-room, and a perfume of brandy and water met her as she entered. He turned an angry gaze upon her.

"Oh, Captain Falkland, here's a telegram!"

He took it and tore it open. Mrs. Vanner watched him eagerly, but he said nothing more decisive than, "Oh, that's it!" and went straight to his daughter's room. From this she ventured to deduce that at least Mr. North was not dead.

"Look here, Constance," said her father, coming in with the telegram.

She took it and read, "*Broken leg. No danger. Please come to me.*" The address was that of the London hotel from which he had previously written.

Her first feeling was one of infinite remorse and self-reproach. There was something delicious even in the sorrow and compassion that overwhelmed her.

"Can you pack up some things and be ready to go off by the half-past seven train?" asked her father.

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"That's right. Put everything in your trunks and lock them, but only take a portmanteau with you. I don't suppose we shall come back here."

With this he left her, and she began to make breathless preparations. She dared not let herself think yet of Arthur's pains of mind and body. It was not indeed until she was in the sheltering darkness of the train to Paris that she suffered herself to think of him. Had he got her father's telegram yet? Was he wakeful and fevered, and counting the hours to her coming? A throb of pleasure made itself felt amid her sorrow, as she thought of being able to soothe and comfort him. Hitherto the gifts had been all from him. It would be her turn now.

She fell asleep once or twice in that long, strange night, and waked with a dream of North's voice in her ear. The grey morning light showed her the long plains of central France, the shadowy ranks of poplars, the silent, lonely world, and the worn faces of her fellow-travellers. In London the day must be

breaking over roofs and chimneys; was this fine rain there too, and was Arthur lifting his weary eyes to watch it, and think of her?

At last they were in Paris. At the station they received a telegram, containing these words, "*Letter at Hôtel Chemin de Fer du Nord.*" They drove to the hotel at once. It was a hot, dull day, with a white sky and indeterminate shadows. At the hotel they asked for the letter, and were shown into a characterless little room to read it. It was addressed to Captain Falkland. He opened it, looked it quickly through, and lifted a face of non-comprehension.

"What is it, father? What is it?" cried his daughter in terror.

He dashed down the letter before her. She took it trembling, and read this:—

"I owed you some return for the way you cheated me this summer. You used your daughter to draw me on; I have used her to pay you back. North never wrote to her, or dreamed of writing. I wrote his letters, and I have her answers, which I shall do what I

please with. You may go back again and look out for another son-in-law.

"M. LANCASTER."

Constance Falkland, when she read these words, was at first totally unable to receive their significance. She stared down at the paper, feeling dazed and stunned. It was only when the thought presented itself that they must hurry or they would be late for Arthur, that she remembered that there was no Arthur in the world; and that all her hopes and happiness had crumbled together like a dream. Her father was raging at her side; she did not hear. Life had broken sheer off like a precipice that breaks away a road. She could not conceive any means of going on. The end had come; there was nothing before her. So she felt vaguely, and stood for a minute or two as we stand once or twice in a lifetime, feeling ourselves on the verge of something beyond, and waiting for a voice, a touch, a something, to beckon us over. But the something fails to come, and the clouds of the actual enfold us again, and our feet draw back slowly and un-

willingly to the familiar paths. And so Miss Falkland, instead of falling struck to the earth, walked silently out of the hotel beside her father. She had suffered so often that she knew how to endure suffering, even when it was of an unexampled kind. But this time the suffering hidden behind her impassive face was eating into her very heart. Not Asmodeus himself, the keenest-sighted of all the evil spirits, could have devised a crueller or an apter torment. Proud, reserved, and bitterly conscious of contempt, she had wrapped herself in her silence as in an armour, and would have died sooner than reveal to the cynical world a serious or a tender thought beneath. And she —she of all women—had been entrapped into unfolding to profane, to brutal, and to malignant eyes, the inmost treasures of her soul. That was the thought that tormented her like a fiend. She writhed and winced, thinking of her letters in Lancaster's hands. There was nothing in the letters that any woman might not be proud to have written, and in her heart she was rather proud than ashamed of them; yet the thought that Lancaster's eyes had looked upon

them tortured her with shame and anguish. This was the pain that stung and rankled. The loss of her lover did not at once thus overwhelm her. Like all sudden loss, it was at first veiled by the habit of possession which survives the thing possessed. It was only by slow degrees that her position in regard to North began to grow clear to her. She had grown to love him; all her new life of a fortnight old, that long, new life whose fulness lengthened out to more years than all the previous three-and-twenty, was centred and founded in him. How could she teach herself to understand that he did not exist, that he had never existed; that she had loved the veriest ghost and vapour of a man? How could she, when the thought of North overflowed all her heart with sudden tenderness, remember that the real North was a stranger to her? It was a crueller and more discordant awaking than if, like some maiden of mediæval legend, she had given herself to a spectre. Her spectre had vanished for ever, yet his bodily presentment lived and breathed, looked with the same eyes, spoke with the same tongue, and knew her not.

Gradually, as the real North took shape before her eyes, she was overwhelmed anew by crushing humiliation. He did not know, he would never know; but she knew, and the knowledge was intolerable. And then, beyond these heart-wringing pains, she saw the blank familiar desert of her old life opening before her. Again and again as she journeyed back across France she found herself framing the hopeless question, "Why is it that we are made capable of suffering like this?"

She was glad to agree when her father proposed to give out that the engagement had been broken off by themselves. To be spared the knowledge of the dwellers in the *pension* was at least some trifling alleviation, and it was the only one granted her. Her father, in his wrath and disappointment, was by no means free from the weakness to common man of deeming the woman in fault. If she had not been so obstinate about showing him the letters, this would not have happened; *he* should have known the difference, he should have detected the imposture at once. Upon this theme he harped, when they chanced to

be alone, from one station to another; to this he returned as they drove from the station to the *pension*. Arrived there, however, he took upon himself the explanation of their return, and flattered himself that no one could fail of accepting it.

Miss Falkland walked up the familiar staircase, feeling herself broken with fatigue and suffering. The room which had beheld her joy, mocked her; the green leaves on the balcony were witnesses against her; the sunshine and the blue sky were cruel in their indifferent brilliance. She dropped herself into a chair. She would have given worlds to die, to faint, to pass away from it all, if it were only for a few minutes. But there is no passing away from our bondage, and she had to remain bound among her sorrows, and know that no friendly hand would draw near to set her free.

III.

Terrible days of blankness succeeded the first shock. Captain Falkland went off on some expedition whose details he did not

communicate, and his daughter was left alone. She had ceased to be an object of interest in the *pension.* Madame Marchand no longer looked upon her with smiles, and the unpaid rent appeared again in the foreground. There were moments when, but for a certain tenacity that made her stiffen herself to resist the worst that fate could do to her, Miss Falkland might have been tempted to make an end of all her troubles in the blue lake. It would have been so easy a thing to capsize a boat, the loss to any creature in the world so little. But there was something dogged in her nature that resisted the impulse of flight.

She stood alone, and bore her wounds in silence as usual. But the new wounds had made her sensitive; there seemed scarcely a word in the world, scarcely a thought passing through her mind, that did not touch and leave a pain. She said to herself, "I shall get through somehow," but she said it as we say comforting words to a child in pain, and the pain drowns the comfort.

One day, ten days, perhaps, after her return from Paris, she was told, when she came in

from a walk, that a gentleman was waiting to see her. Her first feeling was of shrinking back. Nothing, it seemed, could come to her except to hurt her more. But she mastered this, and went up to the little salon. She found Arthur North standing waiting for her. The blood rushed to her face. She felt the bitterest, the most overwhelming shame. She paused, unable to lift up her eyes or frame a word. North, who had been extremely pale, coloured in his turn, and was embarrassed for her almost as much as she for herself. But the task of putting her at ease gave him power to find words. He took the hand that had not been offered him.

"I know," he said hurriedly, yet with extreme gentleness, "that it must be very painful for you to see me. I would have written, but I was afraid you might refuse to let me come."

She had recovered herself a little by this time; she advanced farther into the room, and saying mechanically, "Please sit down," seated herself on the sofa.

North obeyed, and there was a brief pause,

in which he carefully abstained from looking at her.

"I cannot tell you," he began with some hesitation, "how pained and grieved I am—how detestable it is to me—that my name should have been used——"

He spoke slowly, and she broke into the pause: "Yes—I know. Please don't speak of it."

"Forgive me, but I must speak of it. Let me speak of it all quite openly, this once, for both our sakes."

He turned his eyes full on her as he spoke, and his tones were less constrained than those he had as yet commanded. Something clearer and freer seemed to come into the air with this petition for truthful speaking. She made a slight motion of the head. She was quite pale now, and self-possessed as usual; but as they looked thus at each other, North saw how much her face was changed, and the marks of ineffaceable suffering melted his heart. He drew out a packet and laid it on the table before him, but kept his hand still upon it.

"Those are your letters," said he. "When

I heard, which I did very indirectly, about all this matter, I went to Lancaster, and made him give them up——"

Here, to his amazement, Miss Falkland shrank together, covered her face with her two hands, and cried out: "Don't! Oh, don't!" He looked at her, not daring to speak, lest he should renew the uncomprehended offence.

She raised her face, and said with effort, "Well—you read them?"

"No, no, I did not read them. I have brought them to ask your leave to read them."

She shook her head hastily.

"I can't express to you," North went on, and his voice shook a little, "how touched and honoured I feel that you should have written me those letters."

A slow colour rose in Miss Falkland's pale cheeks, a faint touch of relief and gratitude stirred at her chilled heart.

"I only wish from the bottom of my heart," continued he, "that the letters they answered had indeed been mine."

She started and looked at him with surprised eyes.

"Is it impossible that you should try to think of them as if they were?"

She winced and drew back.

"Let me read these letters; let me read them as mine," begged North.

Then, as she still made no answer, he stood up and came across to her. She shook her head once more and turned aside her face.

"Yes, let me read them; you meant them for me. Don't take away what you would have given me. I know I hurt you, now—but by-and-by—after a little time——"

He ventured to take the hand that lay by her side; she did not withdraw it, she accepted, he even thought that she returned, his clasp. Yet, though he was entirely unversed in the art and practice of love-making, North did not for a moment interpret this non-withdrawal into a sign of assent.

"How good you are! how kind!" she murmured, while her face was still averted. "Any other man would have killed me with humiliation, but you manage to make it all seem better. But no, no, it is impossible."

"Why impossible?" demanded North.

"You have shown me once that you could believe in me and trust yourself to me. I am the same man that you thought me then. I claim it as a right that you should think no worse of me."

"I don't. I don't think worse of you—it is not that. But it is not the same—you never would have come but for this, you never would have thought about me else."

"That is true," North admitted. "I had got out of the way of thinking such things possible for myself. But I know now that there is a woman to whom it would not have been impossible. It is for my own sake, not yours, that I come to you. If you can tell me that, all the time you wrote those letters to me, you felt no affection for me, I'll go away—but if not—— You can't tell me that."

He bent over her, insisting. She stood up and faced him.

"No, I can't tell you that. But it was not for you. It was all a dream. What is the use of talking of it as if it were you? You know, Mr. North, in your heart you know, that you would never have chosen me for a wife. It is

ungenerous of you to take advantage of a deception. Oh, I know you meant it for kindness, but it is ungenerous, all the same. What must you think of me, if you think that I could take you like this ? "

" I think," said North, very seriously, " that you will have spoilt my life for me if you don't. You say I never should have thought of you. It is true, I should not. But I think of you now. I shall never cease to think of you. You have never been out of my mind for an instant since I heard of all this. If you knew the temptation those letters have been to me ! "

She still stood silent with her eyes cast down. Some look of frailness and of youth carried him suddenly out of his course, and in place of temperate eloquence, he found himself uttering a broken cry : " My dear, my dear, let me take care of you ! "

The cry moved her ; she looked up, half-alarmed. Tears were gathering in her eyes, and her lips trembled. Something in North's face arrested her ; it began to dawn upon her that her dream was becoming truth. As for

North, he had ceased to think, to consider, to be cautious; and when the frightened eyes looked up at him, everything vanished out of the world except the overmastering desire to have this desolate girl safe under his own shelter. The thought of her had grown so close to him in these last few days that he forgot how little the case sanctioned him, and letting feeling have its way, he simply drew her to him in a long embrace, and kissed her. She broke out into tears, and sobbed, "You should not, you should not!" But she made no struggle to free herself. The unspeakable comfort of feeling love and sympathy around her was undermining her resolution in spite of herself. His kiss had been more convincing than all those letters out of the time of dreams.

North said nothing at all, but held her close against him, and let her sob in peace. Then, mastering her tears a little, she whispered: "You may read the letters—and then, afterwards—if you come back again——"

The whisper went no further, and North did not feel it necessary to press for a conclusion.

II.

THE PROFESSOR'S PIANO.

II.

THE PROFESSOR'S PIANO.

PROFESSOR AIRD, as the whole scientific world knows, has for many years occupied the Chair of Applied Mechanics in the renowned and ancient University of Saltburgh, N.B., and for some time past had been giving particular attention to a further development of the phonograph. On his return from a brief holiday in Norway, the summer before last, he went one evening to visit his geological colleague, Professor Drayson. A niece of Professor Drayson's, a Miss Margaret Hall, was staying with her uncle, and Dr. Aird, as he glanced at this young lady, who was about nineteen and extremely pretty, found it in his heart to regret that Providence had given him only nephews.

From geology, the two professors presently diverged to gossip. "That young Skipwith

has made a pretty use of his talents," remarked Professor Drayson.

"No? Really? In what way? I have been so out of the way of news in Norway."

"Oh, don't you know?" cried uncle and niece in one breath; and Miss Hall fetched a newspaper ten days old, in which Professor Aird read of a great diamond robbery executed by an impecunious young gentleman and his wife. The wife had been found and identified as Mrs. Skipwith, but the husband and the diamonds had disappeared.

"There was no clear evidence against her, you see, and so they let her go," said Professor Drayson. "But, of course, the police will have an eye upon her, and sooner or later she will go to him, and he will be taken. She was a Miss Carroll, and has friends in Saltburgh. I believe he met her here. It is a terrible thing for them."

"Poor girl!" said Professor Aird.

"She has herself to thank," returned the other professor, with a glance at his niece. "She married him against the advice of all her friends." Professor Aird, feeling that

something uncomfortable underlay this observation, began to seek a change of subject, and said, with an amiable smile, "I see that another pupil of yours, that clever young fellow Ashley, has just got an appointment in America."

"Don't speak to me of Ashley!" cried his colleague, furiously, "I won't hear his name."

There was a moment's silence. Miss Hall had neither moved nor looked up. Professor Aird, as a peace-loving man, said a few indifferent words to show that he was not offended, and then took his leave. Miss Hall smiled upon him with marked friendliness, and shook his hand with something like fervour. It was clear to him that she was trying to make amends for the roughness of her uncle.

"So Skipwith has stolen diamonds; and Ashley is to teach geology to the young Yankees," said the professor to himself as he walked homeward. And then he wondered whether Professor Drayson could possibly have desired that American appointment for himself.

The rooms tenanted by the Professor of Applied Mechanics were large, but they were always filled to overflowing by strange instruments, vessels, and drawings. His landlady, as he entered, was seeking an unoccupied table-corner whereon to set a tray with his frugal supper. He sat down, absent-mindedly, and she, deeply interested in her own news, remarked, "I have let the second-floor rooms, sir, to a gentleman by the name of Johnson."

The professor started and looked up, and murmured vaguely, "Indeed!" Then a sudden thought passed across him, and he said eagerly, "I wonder if you could make room upstairs for that old piano? I really haven't space for it here."

Mrs. Lester was quite willing, and offered to have the instrument carried up at once.

"I will carry it up in pieces in the morning, and set it up myself, if you have no objection," said the professor.

Accordingly, next morning, Professor Aird dismembered his piano, and carrying the pieces upstairs, rebuilt it in the sitting-room destined for Mr. Johnson. It was but a mere shell,

this piano; it possessed neither hammers nor wires, and beneath the locked keyboard the professor erected a piece of mechanism, quite foreign to the normal structure of a piano. This, which any expert would have recognised as forming part of a magnified phonograph, was composed mainly of a large disc of skin or parchment, stretched like a tambourine, a long, grooved, metal cylinder, and several long and narrow strips of tinfoil. Having arranged all these components with great precision, the professor fitted in the inclosing panel, and going to the farther end of the room, recited with slow and distinct utterance a soliloquy from *Hamlet*.

This strange incantation over, he returned to the piano, unfastened the lower panel once more, and shifted some inner screw. Slowly and distinctly there issued from the interior of the piano the echoed words, "To be or not to be? that is the question." The voice was clear and a little monotonous, and it had that slight nasal twang peculiar to all phonographs, which marks, perhaps, their American origin.

The professor listened with a face of rapture to this Punch-like mimicry, and then, shutting in his machinery, went back, happy, to his room. Surely this great work, which had occupied him for the last twelvemonth, was going to be successful. The phonograph, that mysterious over-hearer and reporter of men's speech, was about to receive new powers. The discreet phonographs of other inventors did but retain and repeat what was addressed directly to themselves; the phonograph of Professor Aird, with its larger disc and more sensitive mechanism, was intended to reproduce every word uttered in the same room with it. Such a machine, if it did but fulfil his hopes, would redeliver the whole dialogue of a play, or all the debates of a Parliamentary session. An Aird-phonograph would henceforth be stationed in every court of law, and tell its tale, by means of a telephone, in every newspaper office. But before introducing his cherished instrument to the world, the professor was resolved to test it fairly; and dreading self-deception, had snatched at the chance of stationing it in a stranger's room, where

it might imbibe and reproduce conversations with which he could not possibly be acquainted beforehand.

Early in the evening the new lodger arrived. The professor listened anxiously for sounds of speech; but Mr. Johnson, being alone, was naturally silent. Later in the evening, however, the eager professor heard a step ascend the stairs, heard some one knock and enter, and then the welcome murmur of earnest conversation. Before very long there came a step again upon the stairs—nay, two steps, and two voices, speaking low. Was Mr. Johnson going out with his friend? The steps reached the house-door; it was closed noisily, and no one returned. The professor thereupon crept furtively upstairs, withdrew from the heart of the piano a strip of the foil whose tiny indentations formed the mysterious reproductive language of the phonograph, and left the instrument ready to register another report. Arrived in his own room he placed the precious strip in a twin phonograph, which he set in motion, and sat down before it with an expectant smile.

In about a minute the machine began to speak. The two voices of the dialogue were clearly distinguishable, and the following conversation arrived unmistakably at the professor's ears :—

A. Well, here you are, Harry.

B. Yes, here I am. Thanks very much for taking the rooms. But are there not a good many people in the house? Do you think it quite safe?

A. Quite. The people on the ground floor are out all day, and on the first floor there is nobody but old Aird, who might as well be deaf and blind for anything he notices of what goes on around him.

"H'm!" said the professor, with a slight tone of offence.

B. Old Aird! Good Heavens, Tom, but he will know me!

A. Not a bit of it. I should not know you myself with that beard.

"Who on earth can it be?" thought the bewildered professor, trying in vain to abstract the phonographic twang, and to identify the voice behind.

B. And how is she? Does she know? Have you seen her?

A. Yes, I saw her. She says you must on no account attempt to meet her; it would not be safe, they watch her so. But she will come, all right, on Thursday morning.

B. I won't go without her whatever happens. What a cruel thing it is that I can't go boldly up and claim her!

A. Well, you can, if you don't mind going to prison.

"Prison!" echoed the professor, who, with every word, was growing more certain that the speaker was the unhappy Skipwith. And in the horror of this confirmation he missed the next word or two, and only heard the answer to them.

B. And to have to wait till Thursday! Oh, the law's delays are intolerable.

A. I would not complain of the law's delays if I were you, when you are meditating a flagrant breach of them, with indefinite penalties to follow.

B. I don't care about penalties when once I am out of the island. There's no extradition for offences of my sort.

"What can that mean?" thought the wondering listener.

A. I advise you to make the theft secure before you begin to boast. But come along. I came to fetch you for a stroll. You must not venture out by day, you know; and you will be beside yourself by to-morrow night, if you stay shut up all the time in this dull room.

The professor sat before the silent phonograph and gazed blankly at its stationary works. He even forgot, in the amazement and horror of these revelations, to rejoice in the success of his invention. He was like the legendary possessor of some supernatural power who invariably finds a curse wrapped up in his gift.

Was this indeed Skipwith to whose voice his familiar had listened? And if so, was the wretched young man plotting yet further crimes? What was it that his accomplice had said; "I would not complain of the law's delays if I were you, when you are meditating a flagrant breach of them with indefinite penalties to follow." Indefinite penalties? Of what crime, in a civilised

country, are the penalties indefinite? The professor was as ignorant as any other law-abiding Briton of the intricacies of his country's criminal law; but he had a confirmed impression that it was only offences of a political character for which there was no extradition. Plots and explosions, and rumours of plots and explosions, were rife at that time. Was this misguided young man (the professor perceived clearly that the man who could call him "*old* Aird" must be young) taking part in some conspiracy? Was it some dynamite outrage that these young ruffians were hatching? And in what manner ought he, Professor Aird, to intervene? Could he, in fairness, make use of knowledge obtained by an elaborate process of mechanical eavesdropping? And yet, on the other hand, could he, as an honest man, permit the planning and execution of a flagrant breach of the law?

"Oh, if I had never set up the thing at all!" sighed the unhappy professor. And he resolved to stop his phonograph from reporting any more of his fellow-lodger's

conversations. He took a box of matches, and stepped lightly to Mr. Johnson's dark and empty room.

He had just struck a match, and was on his knees between the feet of the piano, when a sound came to his ears, and sent a chill of alarm to his inmost heart. Some one had opened the house-door with a latch-key. The professor blew out the match, and listened breathlessly. In the silence he remarked that rain was pattering sharply on the windows. No doubt Mr. Johnson had been driven back by stress of weather, and would come in to discover him. And if he went out, Mr. Johnson would meet him on the upper flight of stairs, and would know whence he came. But there was a second door leading to an adjoining room. There he might wait till his neighbour should come up, and thence steal down unobserved. With furtive speed the professor accordingly withdrew to Mr. Johnson's bedroom, and noiselessly closed the door of communication.

A step came up the stairs, and he felt a horrible certainty that Mr. Johnson would

make his entrance here. Of course he would; he would be wet, he would come to change his clothes. What a horrible, compromising, inexplicable situation for a peaceful professor of science!

Mr. Johnson, however, passed into the next room and struck a light. The professor heard him utter a quick, inarticulate exclamation. A sound followed, which might be the tearing open of a letter. A new and even greater dread had by this time taken possession of the professor. How if the outer door of the bedroom should be fastened? Could it be reserved for him to pass the night shut into a cupboard or crouched beneath a bed? And Mr. Johnson, he recollected, did not dare to go out by daylight. At that moment the professor was almost ready to regret that he had ever had the idea of inventing a phonograph. Slowly, step by step, guided by what little light shone in at the window, he made his way to the door and laid his hand upon the handle. It turned with a faint squeak that sounded in his ears thunder-loud, and the door opened. He slipped out, and crept back thankfully to his

own domains, vowing never again to trespass on those of his neighbour.

Next morning he had arrived at a resolution. He would not denounce Skipwith to the authorities, but he would make an effort to see Mrs. Skipwith (who was clearly in Saltburgh), and would warn her, with threats of exposure, that the projected crime of Thursday, whatever it might be, must be abandoned. He set forth accordingly to call on Professor Drayson, who could probably give him the addresses of her friends in Saltburgh. Professor Drayson was out, and his sister, a severe lady of whom Professor Aird stood in some awe, received him. Miss Hall was also present.

"Can you tell me," the professor asked presently, "the address of some people, called, if I remember rightly, Carroll, of whom your brother was speaking the other evening—relations of that poor Mrs. Skipwith?"

"That 'poor' Mrs. Skipwith!" repeated Miss Drayson. "You are too charitable, Dr. Aird. No, I do not know their address."

"I do," said Miss Hall. "They live at 15,

King Street. But they are gone away to the Highlands for a fortnight."

"A fortnight!" echoed the professor in dismay. "Dear me, how very awkward." And he fell into a browner study than usual, so that he scarcely remarked the coming of a servant to the door, and the summoning away of Miss Drayson by means of the portentous formula, "Can I speak to you a moment, please, ma'am?"

As soon as the door was well closed upon her aunt, Miss Hall rose, came across to the professor, and said, in a hurried, lowered voice: "Dr. Aird, will you do me a great favour? Will you post a letter for me without looking at it, and never tell anybody about it?"

"But, my dear——" expostulated the professor, faintly.

"It is to Mr. Ashley. They won't let me see him or hear from him. They have been so cruel to him. And you know—*you* know, Dr. Aird, that he is not the sort of person to deserve that."

At the name of Ashley, the professor softened. Young Ashley was, to his mind, a most deserv-

ing and promising young man. And he was on the eve of crossing the Atlantic to that American appointment. This could only be a letter of farewell.

"Here comes my aunt," whispered she.

He held out his hand, received and secreted the letter.

In two minutes' time he had already begun to repent; but Miss Drayson was in the room, and it was impossible to give back the letter. So he posted it, without looking at the address, and went home reflecting what he, in his turn, should write to Mrs. Skipwith. It took him the whole afternoon to compose a letter which should not betray the secret to any outsider, and yet should serve as an effective warning to desist from the contemplated crime of Thursday.

At last the letter was finished and posted, and he had nothing to do but to meditate upon this extraordinary chain of events, and listen to the footsteps of Mr. Johnson overhead. When the darkness had fully gathered Mr. Johnson went out, and the professor, unmindful of yesterday's terrors and resolves, hastened up-

stairs. But behold! Mr. Johnson had locked his door, and carried away the key. This was a very suspicious circumstance, and baffling to boot. Who could guess what unattainable revelations were hidden away in the bosom of the phonograph-piano, inside that locked apartment?

The professor was still reflecting upon these things when Mrs. Lester brought him his supper. On the tray lay a letter addressed to G. Johnson, Esq., which she was going to carry upstairs.

"And what do you think of Mr. Johnson, Mrs. Lester?" the professor asked, with elaborate carelessness.

"Well, sir," answered Mrs. Lester, "I don't really know what to think of him. There's something about him that I don't understand. I should not wish to think any harm of anybody, least of all a lodger, but it *has* crossed my mind that he might be one of them Irish Fenians."

The professor looked up with sharp interest.

"Sometimes I don't rightly think his name is Johnson at all; and it's plain enough to see

there's something on his mind, for he don't seem to notice what it is he eats, and that's a sure sign of a bad conscience. And when I just opened a book in dusting his table (which I would never have thought of doing, sir, if I hadn't had my suspicions of him), there the first thing I saw in it was something about things that would heave up rocks of hundreds of tons' weight. I declare, sir, I don't know what to think. But he's going on Thursday, that's one thing."

"Going on Thursday!" The professor sighed and shook his head, and said, gravely, that we must hope for the best. Then, when Mrs. Lester had gone, he sat before his untouched supper, and listened to the steps of Mr. Johnson, who was just mounting the stairs with a companion.

Some three-quarters of an hour later, the visitor came down alone, and pausing just before he reached the professor's door, called back: "Harry! Harry! I have left my stick." It flashed across the professor's mind that that letter had been addressed to G. Johnson, and also that the Christian name of Skipwith was

Henry. He sprang up and opened his door. The upper landing was dark, so that he did not see the face of Johnson; but the other man he saw clearly, and recognised at once. This was that mischievous young Stirling whose range of invention had made him, in his student days, the terror, and yet in a certain sense the favourite, of the whole body of professors.

"What, Stirling!" cried Professor Aird, and smiled in spite of himself. It seemed a less offensive thing to be called "Old Aird" now that he knew the offender to be Tom Stirling.

"Good evening, sir," said Stirling, in a tone of unabashed friendliness.

"Step in a moment," said the professor, and Stirling stepped in.

"Who is your friend upstairs?" inquired Professor Aird, sternly.

"Oh, a man I know, called Johnson."

"Do I know him as a man called Johnson?"

"No, sir, I don't think you do."

"What is his other name?"

"Henry."

"Then why are his letters addressed to G. Johnson?"

"I am sure I can't say, sir. Perhaps he has two names."

"Two, at least, I should think," said the professor drily.

Stirling acknowledged the hit by a smile.

"Is it Skipwith?" asked the professor point-blank.

A swift change passed over the ostentatious candour of the young man's countenance. He turned red; his mouth twitched; he looked as if he might be about to laugh—or possibly to cry; finally he clasped his hands together and said in a stifled voice: "Oh, sir, don't, don't betray him!"

"I don't want to betray him," said the professor, hesitatingly. "But I won't have any more wrong done. What is it that he is going to do on Thursday?"

"Leave the country with his wife."

"And what before?"

"How do you know anything about it?" cried Stirling.

"Perhaps I have second sight," said the professor.

"Yes, that must be it," replied the other

solemnly. "I don't deny that you have found us out, and I don't ask you to shield him. I'll only ask you not to do anything before Thursday morning, unless you hear from me. On Thursday you may make everything known to the police if you like."

"You give me your word that this thing—whatever it is—won't be done before Thursday?"

"It can't be done before Thursday," replied Stirling earnestly; and the professor, remembering words from the phonograph to the same effect, believed him.

"Very well; I will take no steps before Thursday, unless I hear from you, or unless I see some special reason to do so."

With that Stirling went away, and the professor was left, for the second time that day, to question the morality of his own good-nature.

Thursday morning came, and nothing had been heard from Stirling. The professor, with a mind made up to stern action, sat at breakfast reading his morning paper. All at once he dropped his knife and fork, and fell back in his chair. The *Scotsman*, as it leaned against

the coffee-pot, presented to his astonished eyes a paragraph describing the arrest of Skipwith on the previous afternoon—in London! Without pausing to reflect, he snatched up the paper, and rushed violently upstairs. He knocked at Mr. Johnson's door. No answer. He went in. The table was prepared for breakfast, but the room was empty.

"Not up yet," said the professor, and knocked at the door of the bedroom.

Again there was no reply, and again the professor followed up his knock by an entrance. And again the room was empty. The bed was smooth and undisturbed. A portmanteau stood, buckled, on the floor. A label upon it bore the name and address of Stirling.

The professor rang the bell with vigour, and Mrs. Lester, in the kitchen, proceeded to make Mr. Johnson's tea. In about a minute, the bell was rung again. She hastened up, and found Professor Aird standing, with a dismayed countenance, in the middle of the room.

"Where is Mr. Johnson?" he asked. "When did he go?"

The landlady glanced through the open door

at the empty sleeping room. Her blank face was answer enough.

"Was he here yesterday morning?"

"Oh, yes, sir, and yesterday night too, up till ten o'clock." And then she fell to wringing her hands, and wondering which of the public buildings would prove to have been blown up.

"Let some one fetch me a cab," said the professor; and leaving his unfinished meal, he betook himself at once to the lodgings of Mr. Stirling, where he learned that Stirling had gone out, some five minutes earlier, in company with an unknown gentleman, and had left no message as to his return.

The professor, full of the darkest forebodings, walked slowly home, pausing upon the way to complete his interrupted breakfast. It was thus nearly an hour later when he returned to Mrs. Lester's. A cab stood at the door, and on his entrance he was told that Mr. Stirling was waiting to see him. The professor sprang upstairs like a school-boy.

"Well, sir," cried he, as he burst into his own room, "what is the meaning of all this, I should like to know?"

Stirling, with a face of deep seriousness, drew from his pocket a small, wedge-shaped package, and held it out in silence.

The professor hastily tore open the paper, and beheld a cardboard box, such as is used for the transmission of wedding-cake. He frowned; the receptacle seemed to him indecently frivolous. Then it flashed across him that the stolen diamonds might be within it. The box, however, contained an orthodox fragment of bride-cake. The professor stared at it, stupefied, and hardly remarked that, as he opened the box, three cards fell to the ground.

Stirling picked them up and presented them, displayed on his palm.

The professor saw printed upon the first, *Mr. Henry Ashley*; upon the second, *Miss Margaret Hall*; and upon the third—which was duly bordered with silver—*Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ashley*. On the first was added in pencil "Mr. G. Johnson," and on the last "In spite of the Lord Chancellor."

Light began to dawn on the bewildered professor. "Then it was Ashley and not

Skipwith?" cried he. And Stirling, with a broad grin, nodded.

"I begin to understand," said the professor slowly. "But why 'In spite of the Lord Chancellor'?"

"Because Miss Hall was a ward of court, and Ashley was forbidden to see her."

"Ah!" said the professor, still meditative, "then it is marrying a ward in Chancery, is it, which is the offence for which there's no extradition?" Then, with a sudden change of face, he cried out, "Come upstairs, sir! Come upstairs, Tom! I want to show you something."

And thus it fell out that Tom Stirling—the unlikeliest man in all Saltburgh—was the first to learn the secret of the professor's piano.

III.

CAPTAIN LACKLAND.

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CAPTAIN LACKLAND.

I.

THREE gentlemen were sitting together in a room in London, one afternoon, in the early summer of the year 1744. The eldest of these was Lord Lackland, a nobleman now somewhat advanced in life, whose character his worst enemy could hardly hope to blacken, and whose manners the polite could but aspire to equal. Near him sat his son, Captain Eustace Lackland, who had recently, at the conclusion of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, returned to England, and who was at this time nearly twenty-six years old, as happy-tempered, improvident, and agreeable a young gentleman as any in his majesty's service. Their companion was Sir John Goldwin, a busy person, often described, both inaccurately and inadequately, as "a worthy merchant."

"Our affairs, Eustace," Lord Lackland was saying, "are, in short, in the most hopeless posture of embarrassment, and I look to you to retrieve the fortunes of the family."

"I can assure you, sir," answered Eustace, "of my entire willingness to oblige you. May I ask whether you have any scheme to recommend for the purpose?"

"You must marry," said Lord Lackland.

The young gentleman, carelessly shifting his position so as to bring a second shoe buckle under observation, replied: "'Tis not so long, sir, since I had a mind to the step and you forbade it."

"Pshaw! folly!" cried his lordship (though, indeed, these were not the strongest interjections that he employed), "why do you speak of that boyish madness? You ought to thank me for having saved you from it; as I warrant your cousin Rosa does by this time. You must marry a woman who will enable you to make some figure in the world. You have a fine person, a captain's title, and some reputation as a soldier; your name is as old as any in England."

Here the young gentleman appeared to murmur that, like some other ancient things, it had become no little tarnished; but Lord Lackland was discreetly deaf.

"The world must be changed indeed if these things cannot purchase a wealthy wife. And, let me tell you, 'tis vain to look to me for the payment of your debts."

"Indeed, sir," returned Eustace with some simplicity, "I have no such expectation. As for marriage, though I have of late entertained no design of it, nor can think the state conducive in general to happiness, yet (the lady not objectible, and an addition of fortune attending) I have no unconquerable aversions to it."

Lord Lackland smiled. "Sir John," said he, "has been opening to me a proposal."

Here Sir John, a gentleman at all times impatient of silence, took up the word. "The lady, Captain Lackland, is Miss Dorothy Marlowe. She is of most honourable family, not yet turned of twenty, and has always lived with her aunt in a retired part of Devonshire. She is, I am informed, very handsome, and perfectly well bred and polite."

Eustace heard this account with great attention and little belief. The lady, he said to himself, was no doubt an awkward rustic whom her friends were desirous of establishing in life. For was it credible to any reflecting mind that the guardians of a young creature of wealth and family, perfectly well bred and handsome, would offer her in marriage to a penniless and indebted young gentleman of no shining reputation?

"Is it to her aunt," he inquired, "that I owe this favouring proposal?"

Sir John laughed aloud, and Lord Lackland did not repress a smile.

"You are in error, my good Captain Lackland," said Sir John; "the aunt knows nothing of this. She is at present in London, whither she has come partly to consult a physician, her health being but crazy, and partly to take advice with me as to the disposal of her fortune, and the making of her will. She designs to leave everything to Miss Dorothy, who is also—mark me—a considerable heiress in her own right, though she has been kept in ignorance of the circumstance."

"Pray proceed," said Eustace gravely, and Sir John proceeded.

"Miss Marlowe had in her youth great expectations, and was promised in marriage to a gentleman of the neighbourhood, who, her expectations being disappointed, very abruptly and unhandsomely quitted her. Some years after, the unlooked-for death of a relative made her mistress of a considerable fortune. Alarmed by her own experiences, she fears above all things that her niece may be sought in marriage with a view solely to her wealth. But in love, as in war, 'tis a maxim that artifice is ever allowable. The young lady is in Devonshire, under the care of the vicar of the parish, whose daughter is, I believe, her bosom friend. 'Tis your part to go thither, to win the affections of the young lady and the confidence of her guardians, and so to prosecute the affair that you may make her your wife before the aunt is able to interpose."

Eustace appeared to reflect. In all this he could find no explanation of Sir John's eagerness.

"May I ask, Sir John," said he, "what

profit you propose to yourself in this affair? Since, if it be not such as I may hear, I must conclude 'tis to be at my expense, and decline accordingly."

"You are more free, Captain Lackland, than courteous," Sir John returned, reddening. But, meeting the young gentleman's steady gaze, he judged it prudent to be frank, and explained that he had an opportunity of purchasing, at a low figure, the claims of several of Captain Lackland's creditors.

"Ay," said Eustace, carelessly, "I should suppose they are not a very marketable ware. But how, Sir John, if I should take no liking to the young lady? You will scarce, I believe, dispose of my debts at a profit."

"There may be less difficulty, sir," rejoined Sir John, with some asperity, "in disposing of the person of the debtor."

His warmth convinced Eustace that his interests were involved. He asked the name of Miss Dorothy Marlowe's residence, and was told that the village was called Rosedale, and the vicar, Dr. Barnard.

"She is, I believe," said Sir John, "a good

girl; accomplished, docile, and might make any man happy."

A picture rose up before the young man's imagination of the simple country girl, not yet turned of twenty, growing up like a rose in a parsonage garden. He kept silence for a minute or so; then looking up, and becoming aware of his father's eyes upon him, shrugged his shoulders, and said indifferently that he was ready to go into Devonshire if they wished, to find the lady agreeable if he could, and if so, to do his endeavour to be pleasing to her in turn. And with this, after inquiring whether they had any further commands for him, he took his leave.

Captain Lackland went down into Devonshire in a temper as careless and cheerful as usual. The weather was agreeable, the adventure promised to be entertaining, and the part he was to play looked less black from his own point of view than when it was but a project of Sir John's. For he was, notwithstanding his carelessness, beginning to grow weary of his idle and indebted course of life, and found it easy to imagine himself entering upon new

and better ways. And as for Miss Dorothy Marlowe, it is perhaps hardly strange that he could think it no irreparable injury to her to be made his wife, since he was sure he should never behave otherwise than kindly to any woman whom he could like well enough to marry.

II.

On the lawn, as we should say—they called it the bowling green—of Rosedale parsonage several young people were at play. Their game was a sort of blind-man's-buff, in which all the players who were not blindfolded joined hands in a ring, the blindfolded forming its centre. The endeavours of each to elude the pursuer without breaking the circle caused a lively fluctuation. The game was at its briskest when a well-dressed young gentleman approached through the wicket gate that divided the garden from the churchyard, and finding himself unobserved, stood looking on at the group of players as they advanced and retreated with swift motions and sudden laughter. His attention was at once attracted

by a young lady whose airs of languor distinguished her at least as much as her really remarkable good looks. There was in her dress, too, something a little more studied than in that of her companions. Eustace watched her, and wondered whether this was Miss Dorothy Marlowe. From her, his eye wandered to the three or four young men who were of the party, and he caught himself regarding them with some jealous displeasure. He could not deny to himself that two of them, at least, were neither awkward nor rustic. It appeared unpleasantly probable that he might be forestalled. As these thoughts were passing through his mind he perceived that he was observed. The circle was broken, and a lady, somewhat graver and older than most of the others, came towards him. Eustace, on his side, was advancing bareheaded to meet her, when, to his unbounded amazement, he felt himself encircled by a pair of arms. Starting, he turned, and found that the young lady who was blindfolded, being, of course, unable to see that a stranger had approached, had taken him prisoner. She

held him firmly with one hand, while the other was employed in exploring his height and testing the texture of his coat.

"William," said she, in a clear and decided voice, and let him go.

Some of her fellow-players, recovering the power of speech, cried out in dismay, "No, no; oh, Dorothy!"

At the name "Dorothy" Eustace instantly looked back. She, finding herself mistaken, in the same moment laid hands on him again. Again a resolute grasp detained his arm, and a gentle and inquiring little hand travelled up to gain a complete assurance of his stature.

"Then 'tis you, Dr. Barnard; but truly, sir, since you are fairly caught, you must abide your fortune."

"Indeed, madam, I ask no better," said Eustace.

His voice, the confused exclamations of her comrades, the touch of the sword hilt, upon which her hand chanced to fall, combined to proclaim to her her error.

"Who—who, then?" she cried.

She snatched off the bandage, and displayed

to Eustace's curiosity an alarmed countenance in which a pair of brown, clear, and dark eyes formed so remarkable a feature that the beholder was apt to lose sight of everything else. Eustace knew of nothing but her eyes and her expression. He did not remember to consider whether she was beautiful; he only received the impression of a genuine and beautiful nature.

"Oh, sir!" she stammered, "indeed, I ask your pardon."

And as she spoke she blushed violently.

Eustace replied, he hardly knew in what words, that it was rather he who had need of pardon; and went on to say—a little insincerely, "I was seeking the good vicar, your worthy father."

For it had come into his mind that there might be two Dorothies among this company, and that possibly this was not Miss Marlowe after all. His doubt, however, was not at this time satisfied, for the eldest Miss Barnard, who had before begun to address him, now offered to conduct him to her father, and he was obliged to follow towards the house. But

fortune, favouring his adventure, brought the doctor at this moment into sight. He advanced placidly, and with a benignant smile, and invited Eustace to return with him to his study. The latter, however, protested that his business was by no means private, that he would detain the doctor but a few minutes, and would not trouble him to go back to the house. The doctor bowed, and Eustace began to say that he designed to stay in Rosedale, and desired to lodge with some decent family, no matter how humble, rather than at an inn. He observed, while he spoke, that several of the party were beginning to take leave. Four young ladies remained, of whom Dorothy was one, the languid beauty another, and she who had led him to her father a third. The fourth was a clear-eyed, sensible-looking girl, whom he had heard addressed by the name of Charlotte. At her side lingered the young man called William, for whom Dorothy had at first mistaken him.

The doctor asked counsel of his eldest daughter, Miss Priscilla, who recommended the parish clerk, and Eustace, judging that this

functionary would probably live near at hand, was eager in accepting the proposal. She offered to send for the clerk at once, and went indoors for that purpose, while Eustace, at the doctor's invitation, sat down with him under the arbour, and began to tell him his name, and something of his circumstances. Dr. Barnard, on hearing that his guest was Captain Lackland, made one or two complimentary speeches about what he chose to call his distinguished bravery. Eustace, all this time, was seeking for some way of satisfying himself that Dorothy was indeed Miss Marlowe. He therefore boldly congratulated the vicar upon the beauty and charms of the four young ladies, his daughters.

"Three of them only are mine," replied the doctor,—"Priscilla, to whom you have already spoken, Lucinda, and Charlotte."

But Charlotte had disappeared with William, and only Lucinda and Dorothy remained. Lucinda was the beauty; she dropped a very elegant curtsey at this introduction, and bestowed upon Captain Lackland a dazzling smile.

"This," proceeded the doctor, taking Dorothy's hand, "is Miss Dorothy Marlowe, the niece of my very esteemed good friend and neighbour, Miss Marlowe, and the bosom friend of my daughter Charlotte."

Eustace had bowed to each of the ladies, but his second bow was the more profound. "Miss Charlotte," said he, "is happy in her friend."

"We are all of us happy in her," said the doctor, and led her to the seat beside him.

"And she much more in all of you," returned Dorothy, blushing a little. And she demanded of him, with what countenance he would dare to preach his sermon against self-esteem if he practised a flattery so open.

"Is self-esteem, Miss Marlowe," asked Eustace, "so wonted a theme of the doctor's?"

"Nay," she answered, "'tis but one with which he is always threatening us."

"These disrespectful girls!" cried Dr. Barnard, shaking his head. "I protest this fourth daughter of mine teaches all the restto mock their indulgent parent."

"And I protest, father," said Miss Lucinda, "that for this disrespectful fourth daughter

there is more indulgence reserved than for all the other three."

"Do you confess, Miss Marlowe?" asked Eustace, "or may a stranger be your advocate?"

"Yes, yes!" cried Lucinda, "let us hear what Captain Lackland can find to say for you."

Eustace, not being forbidden, began his speech thus: "For those whom we honour only, and do not love, we have a language of respect and deference. For such as we love, yet cannot honour—which, alas! must in this world sometimes happen—we have a language of tenderness. But where we both love and honour, and where nearness of relation permits, we have a language of playfulness. That tone of amiable mockery which a brother may employ towards a favourite sister, a daughter towards an indulgent father, a husband towards a beloved wife, is the tongue of an inner sanctuary where no stranger may enter. To you, ladies, who have stood all your lives within the sanctuary of a father's love, this atmosphere is familiar. But to Miss Dorothy Marlowe, who

is, if I mistake not, fatherless, it has all the charm of a late acquired possession. You know not, in your happily circumstanced life, how the lonely and excluded longs for such a language to be addressed to him. But I, to whom none speaks with the language of assured love and long confidence, I, who am in truth more orphaned than herself, I know it, and feel all the filial sweetness of Miss Dorothy's amiable raillery."

"Indeed, Captain Lackland," cried Lucinda, "you are a dangerous advocate. If you can plead thus for another, you would, I fear, be irresistible in pleading for yourself."

Eustace bowed, but his eyes were upon Dorothy, who sat looking down.

"Miss Marlowe," he said, "looks grave. I fear I have presumed, in aspiring to utter her feelings."

"No, Captain Lackland," answered Dorothy, —and her eyes, too, answered with a gaze of admirable sweetness and sincerity,—"you have interpreted them to myself. I thank you for the truth."

"And is it also so true, sir," Miss Lucinda

archly inquired, "that you are quite so solitary as you would have us think?"

"It is true, Miss Lucinda, that no heart would next week be greatly the heavier, if I should die to-night."

"Alas! 'Tis a melancholy saying," said Lucinda.

"But one," said her father, cheerfully, "which we may trust that time will remedy. I will venture, my young friend, to prophesy that before ten years have passed away, you, too, will have formed those ties which make a man's death grievous to many."

"Heaven grant it!" said Eustace, piously. And, after a moment's pause, he began to express his thanks for this kind interest in a stranger.

"Oh, sir!" cried Lucinda, "when you have been a little longer in Rosedale you will learn that a stranger is the most agreeable object that can meet our eyes."

"If that be so, madam, I must fear to become your neighbour, lest I lose my only title to your esteem."

"Oh, sir!" said Miss Lucinda, bridling and

smiling, "*you* need be under no such apprehensions."

These speeches of Lucinda's showed, as Eustace would have been ready to acknowledge, a polite and obliging disposition; she was, moreover, undeniably handsome; yet he was aware that if hers had been the name "Dorothy," he would have returned without delay to London, declaring that Miss Marlowe was in truth a very fine young lady, but that she was no wife for him.

A neat maid-servant came out with a message from Miss Priscilla that the clerk was waiting. Eustace went in, and had soon struck a bargain. He was now about to depart; but the vicar, sharing perhaps Lucinda's view of the worth of a stranger in Rosedale, invited him to remain and drink tea. Eustace joyfully accepted. Every minute which he passed in Miss Marlowe's company confirmed his first impression. She spoke little, nor were her smiles so frequent as Miss Lucinda's. But her voice was clear and sweet, and her words had a charming candour and simplicity. The young man called William was of the party.

His attention, however, was solely absorbed by Charlotte, to whom, as it presently appeared, he was shortly to be married.

Eustace took leave with many thanks, and went away in a kind of rapture. But just after quitting the parsonage gate, he was met by a young man on horseback, who, seeing whence he came, bestowed upon him a stare so haughty and so suspicious that Eustace could scarce forbear, as he himself would have said, to take notice of it. Looking back, he saw the rider stoop to lift with his whip the latch of the gate, whereat he in his turn was filled with doubts and suspicions. He tried to comfort himself by reflecting that Miss Lucinda's beauty was remarkable, and that the care with which she was dressed might well betoken some expectation of a visitor. This reflection, however, consoled him but poorly; for, notwithstanding the example of William, he found it difficult to believe that any sane man could seriously consider any other woman while Dorothy was by.

Dorothy, for her part, contributed very little to the discussion of Captain Lackland's words manners and appearance, which arose on his

departure; and later in the evening Lucinda took occasion to rally her upon her reticence. The two girls had strolled out into the garden, and had come to the lawn by the arbour. They stood still for a minute, and Dorothy's face was pensive.

"Ay, indeed!" said Lucinda, shaking her head, and gently pressing her companion's arm; and she gave a little exaggerated sigh. Dorothy turned upon her a grave gaze that would have been reproving, but that she would not consent to understand any meaning worthy of reproof. "'Tis not often, truly, that one shuts one's eyes and makes so fine a capture."

Dorothy at once made a motion to continue their walk. Her colour deepened a little.

"Can you suppose," she asked, with some dignity, "that the recollection is agreeable to me?"

Lucinda made no verbal reply; but she smiled, and presently said again: "But in good earnest, Dorothy, is not Captain Lackland an elegant young gentleman?"

"Yes," said Dorothy, looking up at the tree tops.

"What can have brought him hither? Can he—— Is it possible—— They say that there is mostly a lady for the end of a fine gentleman's journeys."

"Fie, Lucinda!" said Dorothy.

"Nay, wherefore? Who knows? He may, by chance—at some time—have seen—Priscilla."

"For shame, Lucinda!" cried Dorothy; but she could not quite repress a smile, which her comrade was quick to note.

"Aha! you laugh—and now you blush. Dorothy, shall I tell you a saying I read the other day in a book? 'Twas thus, or something like it: '*Of every man and woman over the age of twenty-five, 'tis safer to tell ourselves that the drama of their lives was doubtless played out before we came to take a part in it.*'"

"Nay," began Dorothy, quickly, "did not Captain Lackland himself——" But there she stopped short and diverted the channel of her speech. "But why would you put this saying upon me? Monitress, instruct thyself. 'Tis you, not I, who are so full of Captain Lackland's praises."

"I would fain suit my talk to my company," said Lucinda, again shaking her head.

Dorothy, at that, gave a little indignant exclamation, and walked resolutely away towards the others.

III.

CAPTAIN LACKLAND, breakfasting alone next morning in the parish clerk's cottage, perceived in himself a fresh joyfulness of anticipation to which he had long been a stranger; and his landlady coming in, he engaged her in conversation concerning Dr. Barnard's family. "And the other young lady, Miss—Miss Deborah—is the doctor's niece, is she not?"

"Miss Dorothy, sir."

"Ah, to be sure, Dorothy!" cried the unblushing Eustace; and he repeated the name once or twice as if he sought to imprint it on his memory.

"No, sir; Miss Dorothy Marlowe is not a relation; she is Miss Marlowe's niece, who lives at the other end of the village."

"Indeed? But how comes it then that Miss —Dorothy does not reside with her aunt?"

"Oh, your honour, but she does live with her, but Miss Marlowe is gone away on a journey, and Miss Dorothy is gone up to the Parsonage for company."

"She seems a prettily disposed young lady of her years."

"Oh yes, sir, you may say that indeed. There is not a more dutiful or sweet-tempered young lady in the whole county. And her aunt, so to say, dotes on her."

"Her aunt is a sweet-tempered lady, too, then?"

"Why, no, your honour, not to say sweet-tempered. She is a very grave lady; but then she has had her troubles, as is well known, for she was very rich when she was young, and now she is quite down in the world; not but what she is proud, too, and holds her head with the highest. 'Tis a hard thing, sir, for gentlefolks to be poor."

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Ameson," said Eustace, with an appropriate sigh. "But if the young lady is such as you describe her, and a beauty besides, a husband for her will not be far to seek."

It was Mrs. Ameson who now shook her head. "Ah, sir!" said she, "poverty brings its good looks to but a poor market nowadays. 'Tis true young Squire Broadwood is always riding up to the Parsonage, and on Sundays his eyes are set as firm as a statue's, always staring at the doctor's pew. But la, sir, Miss Lucinda Barnard is more of a beauty than Miss Dorothy, and has a rich lady to her godmother besides. But if Squire Broadwood knew those two young ladies as I do——"

She stopped short, half afraid of having already said too much. Eustace, however, was convinced that she was an extremely intelligent woman. He took occasion to ask whether he had passed Miss Marlowe's cottage the evening before, and she proceeded, as he had hoped that she might, to describe its exact position and appearance.

As soon as she had left him, he sauntered forth, and making a considerable circuit reached Dorothy's home. It was a neat cottage standing in a well-stocked garden. The June sky overhead was radiantly blue, and the birds were shooting busily to and fro among the

trees. Eustace, according to the manner of his time, had no eye for landscape details; but he experienced no less than his successors the pleasant sense of well-being that is born of the breath of summer and the brightness of a sunshiny day. The house was closed; a drowsy stillness rested upon it. Eustace stepped over the low padlocked gate, and turned into a garden path. The trim flower-beds were already beginning to feel their release from human control, and to assume an air of natural exuberance. At the end of one path he found a seat, set back under an arch of green. Here he sat down, and a strange, impatient eagerness took possession of him. To be here, in Dorothy's very home, and yet not to see her, was a keen pleasure with as keen a pain for its kernel. He laid his hand across his eyes that her face might come the plainer before him in the darkness, and so sat lost in a vision in which her glance of yesterday and his hopes of the future wove themselves into a very fairy-land. Suddenly, there were sounds on the pathway; and withdrawing his hand, he beheld Dorothy and Charlotte

standing arm-in-arm before him, and gazing upon him with looks of the utmost amazement. He sprang to his feet; neither his native assurrance (which was considerable) nor his fashionable training availed at the moment to cover his excessive confusion. Not Dorothy herself, when she first saw him yesterday, had blushed more deeply. He could not find a syllable of excuse. His whole self-possession only carried him to the point of snatching off his hat and bowing.

"Captain Lackland! This is indeed a surprise," said Charlotte.

Eustace, in a voice that sounded to himself strangely low and faltering, answered, "I must ask your pardon for thus unwarrantably intruding."

Dorothy, who had stood silent and rather grave, returned gently, but with some little dignity, as being for the time mistress of the house to which she welcomed him, "Indeed, Captain Lackland, we are greatly pleased to see you. I am sorry my aunt is not at home to receive you more fitly. And how can you call yourself an intruder when you knew not

that any one was here? If we had a mind to complain, it should surely rather be that you choose to make your visit in solitude, when we would so gladly have welcomed you."

That is a critical moment in the beginning of a love history, when the presence of the beloved object coincides with some humiliation or embarrassment on the part of the lover, and every critical moment surmounted, becomes, when it ceases to be an obstacle, a step in advance. During one moment Captain Lackland had felt the incipient flame of his love for Dorothy quenched by the sudden weight of shame and self-consciousness; but in the next it blazed up into new strength and clearness, and became a fire of tenfold ardour. He bowed very deeply; the redness of confusion had left his face; but he still found no fitting words. Nature, however, who had been good in many ways to this prodigal, had given him a countenance of great mobility and expressiveness; and it is possible that his face uttered more than might have been permitted to his tongue. Even if the hearts of these young

women had been stern before, they could never have withheld forgiveness from a youth who stood before them with air so penitent, so respectful and so grateful. And yet in that very instant his disingenuous mind had conceived the thought of justifying an afternoon visit to the Parsonage by the plea of a more formal apology. He was invited to accompany the girls on their walk round the garden, and had the felicity of picking strawberries for them. They entered the house by a long window which led into a "morning parlour." The window was standing open, and the shutters were pushed back, for the girls had come out this way. The furniture was all covered up in calico, but a chair or two had been pushed forward, a bureau had been opened, and a long pair of grey mittens lay on it. Eustace noticed that a harpsichord stood in the room. Dorothy, after inviting him to be seated, had gone to the bureau and taken up her mittens and two or three papers before closing it.

"'Tis Miss Dorothy, I suppose, who performs upon the harpsichord?" said Eustace to Charlotte.

"Yes, indeed," Charlotte answered; "she is an accomplished performer."

Eustace ventured to hint his wish to hear her.

"Dorothy," said her friend, who was a young woman of direct speech, "Captain Lackland is desirous to hear a lesson on the harpsichord."

"If it were not too troublesome—if Miss Marlowe would be so condescending," he faltered.

Dorothy with a little smile laid down her mittens and her papers, and went across to the harpsichord.

"An accomplished performer," said Charlotte. What should we say now of Dorothy's performance, or indeed of Dorothy's instrument? She played a quiet and precise little lesson, confined within a narrow compass and of a simplicity at which a school-girl might smile; her harpsichord gave forth but a tinkling ripple of sound, yet there was a gentle grace of completeness, a delicate balance about her music that had its own charm. Nor was the charm for the ear only. Her graceful little figure had

the same delicacy and fineness of finish; and her pale-coloured gown of chintz was fresh and soft tinted. Her air of serious attention delighted Eustace; it afforded him also the opportunity of gazing fixedly upon her without open effrontery.

He walked back with them to the gate of the Parsonage and quitted them, promising himself in secret the pleasure of revisiting them in the afternoon. This plan he carried out; and though he might be thought to transgress the bounds of etiquette a little in making his second visit so early, yet this was a point on which he, as a Londoner, must be admittedly a better judge than any dweller in Rosedale, and the family received him with welcome. Mr. Roger Broadwood indeed, who had met him yesterday at the gate, was by no means pleased to find him there, and showed his displeasure in a demeanour so sullen, that Eustace plainly foresaw there would be a necessity to teach manners to this countryman. But the offences of Mr. Broadwood did not linger long in his memory. He was happy with a happiness for which it would have been

impossible, in words, to assign a ground. He would have blushed to acknowledge thus early, even to himself, a belief that Dorothy loved him ; but those fainter indications, which no words are fine enough to render, and which make about us the atmosphere of anticipatory joy or apprehensive sorrow, made about him an atmosphere of incomparable sweetness, in which he drew his breath with a kind of rapture, not knowing or questioning wherefore.

IV.

Mr. Roger Broadwood being called from home next day, any possibility of a quarrel between him and Eustace was for the time averted, and Eustace's visits to the Parsonage continued undisturbed. The days glided easily by; he had now been in Rosedale a fortnight, he had spent some part of every day in Dorothy's presence, and his love and esteem for her grew at each meeting. The simple family life of the parsonage, the serene sincerity of Dorothy, were things new to him, and, to do him justice, they were things of which he was quick to feel the worth and beauty. To these

kindly and inexperienced people he, on his part, appeared no less deserving than themselves, and infinitely more attractive. His nature had the gift of companionableness; he had a ready ear for every fellow-creature's story, and an inborn disposition to take things and men kindly. He was, in short, a scapegrace whom it was difficult not to love, and there is no reason to doubt that, in such degrees and forms as might be becoming, he was beloved in Doctor Barnard's household.

Things were in this happy condition when Dorothy was one morning called suddenly into the garden by Lucinda. Looking over the hedge she saw, in the road, a lady wearing an elaborate riding dress and walking slowly. Her countenance was handsome, though to the judgment of Rosedale, rather too highly painted, and she had exceedingly fine eyes. These she turned upon the two girls, and maintained a composed stare for perhaps a minute. Then, with a face quite unmoved, she turned her eyes away and walked on.

Lucinda was affronted by this behaviour. "With what insolent curiosity," said she, "this

fine madam regards us! Does she think, forsooth, that we are of a different nature because we wear chintz gowns and no paint on our faces?"

"She is very handsome," said Dorothy, and she felt herself vaguely alarmed. It was not, surely, jealousy that troubled her; but, indeed, our troubles of mind are perhaps not often so definite that we can class them under any of the duly assigned titles. No, Dorothy was not jealous: but there passed across her heart a little pang. Was not this lady one of his own kind, to whom he would feel himself more akin than to people so countrified and of so little knowledge?

Eustace, meanwhile, was sauntering in the churchyard. The path from the Parsonage to the village, it may be remembered, came this way. By-and-by, coming to an old tree, upon whose bark many an initial and numeral and a clumsy heart or two had been scored, he pulled out his knife and began to add another item to the reckoning.

While thus engaged, he heard the gate swing, and turning, more abashed than if he

had been detected in a crime, he saw the lady who had been observed by Lucinda and Dorothy. He came forward, holding his knife behind him, and endeavouring to assume an easy air.

"Cousin!" said he,—"why, cousin!" And then, recovering a little fluency: "In the name of all that's wonderful, what do you here?"

"And in the name of all that's ten times wonderful," she answered, "what do you? Sure, Eustace, the question might come as well from me."

"Ay, indeed, as well or as ill; 'tis but foolish work to converse like the church catechism, in question and answer."

She looked at him with large eyes and returned: "You were not always so apt, Eustace, at your church catechism," a retort which confused him afresh.

"I fear," she continued, "you have a mind to turn hermit and avoid the world. But 'tis in vain; the world will come from as far as the next county to look at you—as I have done."

"Yes, it is as you say, there is no avoiding the world."

"Good Lord, Eustace, what a sigh! You are as moody as a fine lady who has lost her lover or her lap-dog. Indeed, you have a lover-like turn yourself. And, yes—surely——"

She lifted his reluctant hand, looked at the open knife, and then, with laughter in her eyes, surveyed the new-cut letter upon the tree.

"Whose name, Eustace," she demanded, "begins with D?"

Eustace knew not which way to look. He could not meet her eye. At last, calling up what effrontery remained from a very ample natural stock, "The name, madam," he answered, "of Despair."

She can scarcely have credited this tragic declaration, but for a moment she looked grave, and unclasping his fingers from the knife, retained it in her own hand. She seated herself on the wooden bench that ran round the tree.

"And now, once more," said she, "what freak can have brought the brilliant Captain Lackland to moralise, like a sexton, in a graveyard? This will be a good tale for some of your friends in London."

"Ah, London!" cried Eustace. "You have come from London? But why do I ask? The modish cut of that amazon was no country milliner's device."

"No, faith," she replied, looking down at it with some complacency, "for it was my own. Now will my mantua-maker cut fifty more after the same model, and not one wearer of the fifty but will look awkwardly."

"'Tis your privilege to shine, like a will-o'-the-wisp, where those who follow must be lost:

> 'For Rosa's magic might not copied be,
> Within that circle none durst walk but she.'"

"Ah, Eustace!" said she, "how often before has that couplet done service with another name than Rosa's. But keep your compliments for those who love them better. The language of gallantry is not the language of the heart."

To this, as he could not contradict it, the young gentleman ventured no reply.

"There was a time, Eustace," proceeded his cousin, "when you thought me worthy of your sincerer utterances."

"There was a time, Rosa, when we learned nursery songs together, and dreamed of spending our lives as man and wife in an arbour at the end of my father's garden. What then? The world changes, and the little Rosa is a fine lady, and the little Eustace a captain in his majesty's dragoons, owing more money than a score of such as he could pay in a score of lifetimes."

"Do you wish," she asked, eagerly, "to see it paid?"

He answered, truly, that there were few matters which gave him less concern.

"Can you not divine," said she, "what purpose brought me hither?"

To this Eustace, feeling an uncomfortable conviction that any purpose of hers within his range of conjecture would be a purpose very out of tune to his wishes, replied evasively, and in as sprightly a manner as he could, by asking whether he was a wizard, to presume to fathom the motives of a lady of fashion.

But she, still looking out before her with a face of unusual seriousness, said: "You trifle with me. I thought you loved me once."

"Rosa, Rosa," said Eustace, moving uneasily, "why will you stir the ashes of a burnt-out fire?"

"Burnt out!" she cried, turning suddenly upon him, and with as sudden a change of tone. "No, not burnt out. Look—look here!"

She drew out and hastily unfolded before him a letter. "Look at your own words. '*Whatever bar a hard fate puts between us, I am yours unalterably and for ever.*' And will you tell me that the fire is burnt out?"

He looked down with a strange wonder and sadness at the letter. The days in which he could have written it seemed distant as the memories of infancy. And so, he thought, we vow "unalterably and for ever," and so we look at the record. It was with a gentle tone that he answered, even though the words had bitterness in them:

"The heart of the boy who wrote thus, belonged indeed to the girl Rosa: but you and I—you, Lady Silverlock, and I, a weary man of the world—what have we to do with the loves of those Arcadian children? You were wise, and wisdom has divided us."

"But wisdom need do so no more. Will you force me to speak more plainly? I am no penniless girl, now."

Eustace was quite pale, and the hand that played with his sword hilt trembled. "Rosa," said he, "let us be friends."

"Friends!" she cried: "will you never forgive me for having denied you once? But 'tis ever thus with you men. A scratch to your vanity will outweigh the deepest wound in a woman's heart, and rankle, unforgiven, for a score of years. For years you have avoided me."

"'Tis true," returned Eustace, warming a little in his turn. "For years I did avoid you. I did as I would have had any other man do who loved you; I left you to be happy, if you could, in the way that you had chosen."

"Ah, yes, 'tis easy to be prudent when the heart is not engaged."

Eustace lifted his eyes, and forbore the retort which was so ready to his tongue. A moment or two went by before she spoke again.

"Your father would not part us now. And if he would, am I not rich enough?"

"Rosa," said Eustace, "hear me; and, woman though you are, be generous enough to forgive a man for telling you the truth."

"Speak," said she; and he spoke with a tone of conviction, that warmed into fervour, thus:—

"There comes a time in a man's life when the paint rubs off from the intrigues of this bustling world, and he begins to sicken of the whirligig, life, and of himself. Then, conscious of his own weakness, he longs for better things. Heaven is too far off, and the angels have deserted us, but there are yet pure and simple women. And such a woman, Rosa, must be my wife. You and I, who always have been half brother and sister, are too much alike. We should but pull each other down. The same life has tinged us both. The wife I seek must be no woman of the world, learned at cards, accomplished in a minuet, but an open-hearted girl, whose song came to her from the birds, and her complexion from the hand of nature——"

He had forgotten himself and his hearer, and it was with the utmost surprise that he heard his cousin's angry interruption.

"A country girl, doubtless—and born at Rosedale in Devonshire—and her name to begin with a D!"

Eustace could but look at her, amazed at the violence of her tone and the fierceness of her eyes. But she was now too angry to be quelled as before by a look.

"Oh, fie!" she exclaimed. "Now is all out! The picture was too glowing for a fancy portrait. This, then, was the secret of your moralising turn! And will you write to *her* that 'whatever bar a hard fate puts between you, your heart is hers unalterably and for ever'? Will you have the letter, sir, for a copy? I protest 'tis of no use to me."

"And this," thought Eustace, "might have been my wife."

"But who, prithee, is the fair one? One of the vicar's red-cheeked flock, I must presume. 'Tis perhaps that fine languishing thing, whom I saw but now in the Parsonage garden, who smiles so widely to show that her teeth are

white." Suddenly her whole voice and manner changed from the ironical to the menacing. "Your father," she cried, "shall hear of this!"

"As your ladyship pleases. The news will not, I think, greatly discompose him."

"Ha—what? Your father knows it? Then the girl is wealthy. I'll unmask you, Eustace. Oh, artful! to profess, even to me, who should know better, a disinterested love. But Dr. Barnard shall know that for all your ancient name you are but a penniless adventurer."

"Dr. Barnard, madam, knows it as well as you."

"Still, I have your letters. *She* shall see them."

"And do you think that a six years' old letter will avail against a lover of to-day?"

She was silent; and Eustace began to regret his open dealing, and to consider what was now best to do. He had no faith in the reality of any serious love on his cousin's part for himself; on the other hand, he fully credited her with the same affection of habit, of whose influence with himself he was very conscious. And since the paths of complete veracity had

proved so dangerous, he returned within the borders of double dealing.

"Rosa," said he, "if I have mortified you, I ask your pardon. Forgive, and believe that it was not my design."

She made no answer.

"Must we be enemies because my fate compels me to marry a wealthier woman? Believe me, it must be so."

"It was not necessity that spoke in your discourse."

"Is not every man willing to put the best face upon his deed? Perhaps, too, a little natural petulance—— Forget the moment's outburst, and remember only that, for the sake of his name—for the sake of his estate, your cousin must marry something larger than even Lady Silverlock's jointure."

"Is this earnest?" asked she.

"The most solemn earnest, urged upon me not three weeks since by Sir John Goldwin and my father."

"'Twas money drew you to this paragon? On your honour?"

"On my honour," answered Eustace, colour-

ing, however, a little, and with grace enough in him to be ashamed of the subterfuge, "'twas money drew me to her."

She looked at him; he was unable even to guess how far she believed him. After a moment she said that if this were so, she would stand his friend, and asked him to bring her acquainted with the vicar and his family. "Your suit," said she, "may prosper none the worse for bringing on the scene a wealthy lady relative."

Eustace hesitated. The proposition was by no means to his taste, but he could see no way of refusal. And before he had yet found an answer, that circumstance intervened, in hope of which he had originally placed himself here. Dorothy and Lucinda came through the churchyard wall-gate and along the path, on their way to the village. No choice was now left him; he fancied, too, that the young ladies looked somewhat strangely upon him at finding him engaged thus in converse with an unknown fine lady. He hastened therefore to effect the introduction.

"Miss Lucinda, Miss Marlowe, may I

make you acquainted with my cousin, Lady Silverlock?"

The ladies curtseyed. Rosa showed a smile as brilliant as Lucinda's own. Dorothy looked a little serious.

"I was just promising to do myself the honour of visiting you," said Rosa, "when my good fortune brought you this way."

"Oh, madam!" said Lucinda, "'tis for us to wait upon your ladyship."

"I wondered, but half an hour since, what loadstone held my truant cousin in Rosedale. But now I seek no farther; this peaceful seeming village is the abode, I find, of Syrens."

"Oh, madam!" said Lucinda, again.

"And he, I dare swear, is no Ulysses to stop his ears with wool—eh, Eustace?"

"Oh, madam!" cried the delighted Lucinda, "you are too condescending."

Both young ladies noted the Christian name of Captain Lackland, and Lucinda failed not to point out, by-and-by, how elegant a name it was.

Lady Silverlock received Lucinda's speech with a smile; but her eyes were upon Dorothy.

"You are silent, Miss Marlowe," said she; "you view with displeasure this intrusion of a town-bred stranger into your rustic Eden."

"Indeed," answered Dorothy, "your ladyship mistakes. If I am silent 'tis that I would not presume to press myself upon you."

"Proud, as I live! But you must make an exception in your pride for me. The friends of my cousin Eustace (and Miss Marlowe, I hope, is one of them) must be mine."

"Alas! madam, what can you find worth having in the friendship of an ignorant country girl?"

"Leave me, my pretty one, to judge of that. If you will promise to endure the fine lady, I will make shift to be content with the country maiden. For 'tis in friendship, as in love, that engagement stands the firmest where in each party is rather sensible of opposing merits in the other, than desirous to display their own. I protest my cousin has made me curious to know you. But, faith, 'tis not as Miss Marlowe that I would know you."

"How then, madam?" asked Dorothy,

with a look of surprised, yet steady, reproof, and with a face that refused the acknowledgment of a blush.

"Nay, is there no other name dearer than that? You look at me as if I meant mischievously. Forgive me, sweet one, and give me your Christian name—your church catechism name—as a pledge of reconcilement."

"'Tis Dorothy, madam."

"Dorothy! Ay! I have news to tell you of your name. Does not Dorothy begin with a D?"

"Cousin! Nay, I beg!" cried Eustace.

But the protest came too late. Rosa had already pointed out the new-cut D above the seat. Dorothy saw. Her face took again the vivid blush that had clothed it at their first meeting, and she looked suddenly at Eustace. Their eyes, though but for a moment, answered each other, and Rosa's presence, her friendship or her enmity, sank into nothing.

V.

On Sunday morning, some two days after Lady Silverlock's arrival, Eustace was again

standing in the churchyard. The bells were ringing for morning service, and the tall figure of the doctor had already crossed by the path to the vestry door. His family would not now be long in following, and Eustace would have the opportunity of wishing them a good morning, and attending them on their entrance. As he stood, awaiting this happy moment, he became aware that another person was loitering with the like intent, and, his own face darkening, he met the half-forgotten scowl of Mr. Roger Broadwood. Like a true son of Lord Lackland, he bestowed upon his adversary an extremely polite bow, to which the other returned a churlish and reluctant acknowledgment. A minute or so later the little procession emerged from the garden. Lucinda, Priscilla, and Dorothy came together; Charlotte and William followed, a step or two behind. Instantly, Roger on the one side, and Eustace on the other, had pulled off his hat, and stood bowing. Fortune was good to Eustace; Dorothy was on his side, and her first greeting was for him. He took his place beside her, and retained it even while she spoke to Mr.

Broadwood. Her words were friendly and neighbourly; she smiled on him, too, but Eustace believed himself aware of a difference.

A seat in church immediately adjoining the family pew of the vicar had been assigned to Captain Lackland. From this position he could remark that Mr. Broadwood never moved his eyes from that pew, and he was able to assure himself with reasonable certainty that neither Priscilla nor Lucinda was the object of this fixed gaze. He himself was careful to abstain from observation so ostentatious, yet he could at the end of the service have recounted more accurately every rise and fall of Dorothy's eyelashes than the words of the doctor's sermon. But the absorption of all his thoughts in one subject gave him an air of attention that pleased the doctor very much. Lady Silverlock had come in a little late, and distracted the thoughts of the congregation (unused to such spectacles) by the agitation of a vast fan, upon the centre of which shepherds and shepherdesses were sporting.

The quarter of an hour after Sunday morning service was sacred, grace of weather per-

mitting, to social intercourse. The vicar and his daughters were surrounded by neighbours; the churchyard was full of the murmurs of much talking. To-day was an occasion of unwonted eventfulness, for Mr. Broadwood had come home, clad in a suit of half-mourning, and enriched by the legacy of a distant cousin; and a lady of quality, the relative, it was reported, of the admired Captain Lackland, had arrived in the village. Every woman of any standing in Rosedale was ambitious of presentation to her ladyship, and was burning for a near opportunity of inspecting her "Brussels head." But this quarter of an hour could not be prolonged, for everybody's Sunday dinner was waiting, and horses, new harnessed or new saddled, were growing impatient.

Eustace and his cousin and Mr. Broadwood were all asked to return with the doctor's family, as William of course was doing. And now it was that Lady Silverlock showed herself a real and valuable ally. She devoted herself to the entertainment of Mr. Broadwood, and exercised upon him her utmost powers of fascination. Surly and restive as he was, he could

not entirely resist, and still less could escape. Thus it happened that Eustace, for one or two happy moments, found himself walking virtually alone with Dorothy in the Parsonage garden. She had paused a moment to break off a rose, and was going to put it in her sash ribbon, when Eustace, with sudden and unmistakable earnestness, begged her to give it him. She turned towards him with a look whose first aspect was one of surprise; but behind the surprise lay something else, which was exactly opposite to surprise. She did not change colour, nor did she speak, but held out the rose to him. Eustace, forgetting the gift in the delight of finding it given, stooped and, instead of taking the rose, kissed the hand that held it. The rose, which was of an old-fashioned sort, pale-coloured and open-blossomed, was shaken to pieces, and fell over him in a shower of petals. Bending one knee to the ground, he breathlessly gathered up the rose leaves, and, still kneeling, pressed the little heap passionately to his lips. Dorothy, to whom such demonstrations were entirely novel, and who knew no rules to guide her in such an emer-

gency, found herself overpowered by a strange and bewildering shyness. She turned and walked slowly from him, her head bent down, and the bare rose stalk between her fingers; he followed her.

"You are not angry with me?" he said entreatingly.

"No," she answered in a low voice, and without looking up, "I am not angry with you."

But she hurried her pace a little, and came up with the others. The stalk she slipped into her apron pocket, and held it hidden there. She felt as if her hand must bear stamped upon it, visible to all eyes, the kiss of which she was herself so conscious. And by-and-by, at the turning of a path, she stepped aside, and was seen no more during Eustace's visit.

Captain Lackland went to church again in the evening. Dorothy was in her usual place; Mr. Broadwood, too, was present, but Lady Silverlock was fatigued, and had not come the second time. When the service was over Eustace attended the young ladies of the Parsonage to their own gate. Mr. Broadwood also

paid them this attention. Dorothy was very silent; she hardly said more to either than "good-night." She did not look up as she gave Eustace her hand, but lifted her eyes a moment afterwards, and gave him a brief look that, though grave, was very frank and friendly. It filled him with wildly delightful hopes, and he crossed the churchyard homeward scarcely feeling the ground beneath his feet.

"Captain Lackland," said a voice at his elbow, "a word with you."

He started and turned, very ready to be angry at the interruption. Mr. Broadwood was at his side, and stood regarding him with a severe and menacing countenance.

"I wish to tell you, sir," said he, "that I have Miss Marlowe's permission to address her niece, and that your attentions to a young lady in whom I am so much interested give me great offence. I must beg you therefore to withdraw them."

Eustace had stood still and listened with a calm face.

"If you can assure me, Mr. Broadwood, that you have the young lady's promise, I will of

course desist from any further attempt to recommend myself to her favour."

Mr. Broadwood's brow darkened. "I have Miss Marlowe's sanction——" he began.

"Is it necessary," asked Eustace, "to make any mention of names? I doubt not your assurance that you have that lady's permission to prosecute your suit; but I cannot perceive that you have gained her niece's distinguishing favour. Indeed, I will go so far as to say that I believe the young lady to be ignorant even of your wishes."

"Perhaps she may be; I am under a promise not to endeavour to obtain her hand until her aunt's return. But by Heaven, sir! I will not stand calmly by to see my rights invaded by another. Either resign all pretensions to Miss Dorothy Marlowe——"

"Mr. Broadwood, I will not hear that lady's name bandied between us. Neither you nor I have any right to take it on our lips in such a dispute as this. As to resigning my pretensions—as you call them, though hitherto I have made none—I tell you plainly that I would as soon resign my life."

Here Mr. Broadwood, breaking in with an oath, declared that the choice was indeed between resignation and death.

"That may be so," returned Eustace very quietly. "But I will take leave, Mr. Broadwood, to tell you that I will submit to dictation from no man in this matter; neither will I acknowledge any right on your part to call me to an account."

"You refuse to meet me, sir?"

"I refuse to meet you on a ground of quarrel which I hold to be an insult to a lady. The decision rests with her. If you should succeed in obtaining the preference, I shall not hold myself entitled to complain."

"This is strange conduct, Captain Lackland. In Devonshire we have but one name for a man who shuffles out of a meeting."

"Enough, Mr. Broadwood; I am not so young or so foolish as to be driven from my fixed purpose by any angry man's taunt. The lights are scarce out yet in the church where we have prayed together. This is no time and place for brawls. In the plainest words that can be spoken, I will not fight with you.

When this question has been decided between us, I will be ready to meet you on any other that you may choose to find. But until then I will neither wrong the lady nor myself by meeting you. Good-night."

But Roger Broadwood returned no greeting. A wild flash of rage shone in his face, and he raised his hand. Quick as the movement was, Eustace was quicker, and caught his wrist. They stood there for a moment grasping and grasped, their faces bent together, their eyes sparkling, and their breath quickened. Eustace was for that moment as angry as his opponent, but he recovered himself sooner.

"Is this well done, Mr. Broadwood?" said he, and let his adversary's hand drop. He spoke low, for there was a sound of footsteps behind them. The other muttered a curse and turned upon his heel.

Captain Lackland, it will be perceived, had borne himself in this little interview with a praiseworthy calmness and discretion that were not exactly habitual to him. But now, when he had no longer an adversary before him whom calmness of demeanour might exasperate, his

own temper began to rise, biting retorts began to present themselves, and the demands of Mr. Broadwood appeared in a more and more unpardonable light. It would have gone ill with his discretion if he could have met Mr. Broadwood again. Amid his angry reflections upon the immediate past arose presently some alarms for the future. He must forestall Mr. Broadwood, and win Dorothy at once. He resolved to present himself at the very earliest hour possible at the Parsonage, and demand her hand in set form. Next morning, accordingly, before Lady Silverlock had begun to think of arising, her impulsive cousin was at the door of the Parsonage, and had asked for an interview with Dr. Barnard.

Dr. Barnard was in his study. Eustace's heart beat so fast that he could scarce hear the doctor's words of welcome or see to advance across the room. He made his demand very becomingly, but his voice shook a little, and his face was pale. Dr. Barnard's countenance was grave, but kindly. The answer, he said, must rest with Miss Marlowe, who was now in London, but had left directions that letters

for her might be addressed to the care of Sir John Goldwin. Eustace said—though, to do him justice, not without a certain throb of conscience—that he was known to that gentleman, and the doctor replied that the circumstance was auspicious. Then, after musing for a moment or so, he asked: "Have you any conjecture as to Dorothy's own feelings in this affair?"

"I—I do not know," replied Eustace.

At this, a smile flitted across the doctor's face. "It were well," said he, "that we should forward your application to Miss Marlowe immediately, since it is not in my power to give a reply."

"But your approbation, Dr. Barnard—may I not hope for your approbation?"

"You have it, Captain Lackland," he answered, extending his hand and looking with a cordial smile into the young man's disturbed face. For Eustace found himself by no means so easy and fluent as his wont; and the doctor's friendliness was beginning to awaken in him a sense of shame.

"I will myself," said the doctor, "write to

Miss Marlowe in your favour. Here are pens and ink. Your impatience will no doubt ill bear delay."

He pushed his "standish" towards Eustace, and selecting a pen began to mend it. Eustace, on his part, sat with his pen in his hand looking to the ground, and feeling himself very despicable. Then he felt the doctor's eye upon him, and bending down set place and date at the top of his page, and began to write his mock letter to Miss Marlowe. He had never dreamed that his deception would be so bitter to him when he came to carry it out. Dr. Barnard had finished writing and looked across at him. The pain and shame by which he was beset must have been legible in his face. His agitation seemed to move the doctor's pity, for rising he came to him and laid a hand kindly on his shoulder. Eustace looked up, and letting his pen drop, hid his face upon his hands and broke into tears.

Dr. Barnard had begun to say: "Nay, nay, my dear young friend, this emotion is excessive," when there was a knock at the study door.

The doctor exclaimed "Pshaw!" in an impatient tone, and went to the door. It was a farmer of the neighbourhood, come to take advice upon a letter from his landlord. Dr. Barnard led him to another room, and Eustace was left alone.

A sound from the garden roused his attention. Looking out he saw Dorothy walking slowly in the shadow of the trees. Her face, he thought, showed some slight change, some doubtful dawning of expectation not yet fixed into hope or fear. A town child in a country garden has such a look. Eustace felt the blood spring to his cheek, and was frightened at the momentary penitence that had made him ready to risk his hopes of winning her.

Then a new thought flashed into his mind. Deceit! Nay, what deceit? The false step was not taken yet. Did he not love her with a love that filled his very soul? Would he not have thanked Heaven for leave to take her without a penny? There was no word beyond the truth in his letter to her aunt. Nay, there was no word that attained, even nearly, to the measure of the truth. It was not possible to

express to her, or to any one, by the soulless voice of writing, the whole fulness of what lay in his heart. All that was needed to make him blameless was to send the letter to its proper destination. Or no, better still, he would go himself; he would pour out to this woman, who had been a mother to Dorothy, the love which equalled and transcended her own.

The doctor, returning, found, instead of a pale cheek and trembling voice, a heightened colour, and an eager tone ofhope and animamation. He smiled approvingly upon the young man's eager declaration that he would set out, without a moment's delay, for London.

"And may I hope to make my farewells to the ladies?" Eustace asked. "It is, indeed, very early; yet I saw two of them but now in the garden."

The doctor smiled again, and, bidding him wait a moment, went out, and presently returned with Dorothy. Eustace, on seeing her face, could hardly doubt that the doctor had explained his errand. He himself was greatly agitated.

"May I venture to hope, madam——" said he; and there his speech broke off, while he very timidly took the hand which she had offered him.

"You do not forbid me, then, to address myself to your aunt?"

"No, Captain Lackland," Dorothy replied, in a clear, low voice. And after a moment she added, "I thank you very much for the honour you do me."

She looked at him with clear eyes, in which, though there was much emotion, there was no embarrassment. She seemed as if she would speak again; the perfect sincerity of her disposition was hardly satisfied; the admitted duty of submission to the decree of her elders did not seem, in that moment, to balance the closer duty of entire openness to her lover. But it was too difficult to put into words enough, and yet not too much. She smiled her grave smile, and said, "Will you give my duty to my aunt, and tell her that I am well and happy?"

Eustace eagerly answered that he would. They stood facing each other, hesitating and

undecided, until Doctor Barnard interposed. "Farewell, then, Captain Lackland, and my best wishes go with you."

Then Dorothy perceived the possible words. "And mine," she added, softly.

And, to her great surprise, she found a swift and blinding blush break over her as soon as she had spoken, and all her calm straightforwardness was whirled away and confused, so that she could not remember whether Eustace spoke again, or how the interview ended. She only knew, quite clearly, that the doctor had looked at her with sharp surprise, which passed into rebuke, and that Captain Lackland's lips had, for a moment, touched her fingers. Then he was gone, and she had hurried away, still overclouded by a confusion of shame and emotion, and had broken out into the unwonted excess of fierce weeping. As she wept she became more and more convinced that she had overstepped the bounds of the becoming. Those two words had not been looked for. They were unnecessary, perhaps unmaidenly. The doctor had been shocked by them. Perhaps, even Eustace had been

shocked. But here memory, lifting the cloud a little, showed her a sudden flash of delight transfiguring Eustace's face, and the tide turned. No, to him, at least, she had done right. Her natural mood returned; she had done what seemed to her, at the moment, to be true and right, and she would not have the weakness now to repent of it, or reject it. She dried her tears and stood up, calm again, and re-established in her own approval.

Nor could even the congratulatory railleries of Lady Silverlock disturb her. Her quiet smile replied a little coldly; at some words an answering echo deepened the colour a little on her cheek; but there was no girlish flutter, no confessing smiles, no half-flattered deprecation. Lady Silverlock was puzzled, and almost affronted. She dimly understood a discomfiting power, and began to guess that if Eustace were exposed to the ascendency of Dorothy, her own would never be regained. She began, too, to feel the growth of an antagonism, which was only half jealousy, and had for its other root the fundamental discord of their natures.

Eustace's first business in London was to

find Sir John Goldwin, announce to him his change of intention, and demand Miss Marlowe's address. This Sir John was very unwilling to give; he repeated his assurances of her bitter, suspicious temper, and begged the young man to listen to the counsels of experience. But, finding his advice was thrown away, he at last gave the desired address, and Eustace started on his errand. The distance was not great. Full of good intentions, he turned the corner of the street in which he had learned that Miss Marlowe was living. As he did so, he saw a young gentleman emerge from the house and come towards him. A second glance revealed that this was Roger Broadwood. Surprise, for the moment, paralysed Eustace's usual quickness of thought. He replied mechanically to the other's salute—a salute full of irony, and accompanied by a triumphant smile—and hurried on. He was admitted to Miss Marlowe's presence. The interview was stormy. Miss Marlowe had heard of him already; her jealous temper was inflamed by a strong suspicion that she had been supplanted in her niece's affection by

this interloper, and the first sight of his handsome face, the first declaration of his love for Dorothy, wrought her to fury. His plea that Dorothy looked with favour on him was enough to make her resolve, unalterably, that Dorothy should never see him again. She told him that she had other plans for her niece; that she did not wish to see her match above her station; and, finally, losing her self-control, that Dorothy should not marry him if he were the lord of half the universe. Upon which Eustace, too, waxed angry, bestowed some uncomplimentary remarks on Mr. Broadwood, and assured her that he would lay that gentleman dead in the church porch before he should pass through it to marry Dorothy.

"And for you, madam," he concluded, "I have come to you as an honest man should, and you have treated me with contempt. You seek not your niece's happiness, but your own pleasure. But, beware! henceforth it will be the object of my life to take her from you, and make that happiness, which you regard so little, the first of my life's cares. You refuse me your consent—By Heaven! madam, I will

do without it! By one means or another I will win her, in spite of you."

Miss Marlowe, as well she might, arose in great anger.

"How dare you, sir!" she cried. "Is it a highwayman who addresses me? Truly I knew not that a gentleman of birth could so quickly put on the manners of a ruffian. Go, sir! and as for your empty threats—I am but an old woman, but you may remember that I laughed at them." She turned her back upon him and walked out of the room; an example which Eustace had no choice but to follow.

He walked along the street in a blind tumult of rage, making his way, rather by force of habit than from any deliberation, towards his father's house. All at once some one touched him on the shoulder. Eustace's hand was at his sword; he swung off the intrusive grasp, and turned to meet, as he supposed, Mr. Broadwood. But a rougher face and a dirtier hand than Mr. Broadwood's confronted him. His next thought was that these (for there were two men) were highwaymen, and he smiled quickly to think at

how ill a moment for themselves they had chosen to attack him. He was in the mood to relish any desperate encounter, and his temper may have been legible in his face, for his adversaries stood hesitating. "Gently, Captain Lackland," said one of them deprecatingly, "we have got a chair here at hand; you had best come quietly, sir. It is at the suit of——" Then the lackless prodigal knew what had happened to him; and in the same moment he became convinced, in defiance of all possibility, that this was a plot devised by Mr. Broadwood and Miss Marlowe to keep him from Dorothy. He bade them touch him at his peril; he vowed unblushingly that he owed no man a penny; and standing sword in hand, swore to run any man through the body who should attempt to lay hands upon him. His opponents stood somewhat discomfited; they did not venture to draw nearer, but they did not yield their ground. By this time a little knot of bystanders had gathered who watched the debate with interest. To them Eustace gave no heed, until suddenly he found himself grasped firmly round the body above the

elbows, and perceived too late that he had omitted the precaution of setting his back to the wall. A wild and fruitless struggle followed. Eustace poured forth imprecations and entreaties in equal measure; he appealed in moving terms to the crowd, declaring himself the victim of a vile conspiracy; then he denounced all sorts of terrible vengeance upon his assailants; and so, cursing and appealing, was finally overpowered and thrust into the sedan chair that was in waiting.

Arrived at his destination, which was an exceedingly unclean and heavily barred apartment in a back street, he demanded pen, paper, and a messenger, and set himself to write in the most moving terms to his father, to Sir John Goldwin, and to a comrade in arms, who might, he hoped, be yet in London.

When these letters were dispatched, he sat down with his face against the imprisoning bars of the dirty window, and gave way to despair. The thought of Dorothy drove him to madness. Her aunt would go home, and they would speak evil to her of him, and she would be given to Roger Broadwood. And

she loved him—he was certain that she loved him; the misery would be hers too. Oh, if his father, if Sir John would only come! Then, with a sickening horror, it flashed across him that his debts were in Sir John's hands, and that Sir John must have done this. Then, indeed, it seemed to him that he was in a trap; and for a while he became like a wild beast, with no thought in his brain but that of rending his captors. And all that night no message came to him, nor the next day, nor the next. Five days he sat there in his sordid prison, eating out his heart. There had been time for them to go back to Devonshire, and for the marriage to have taken place. Eustace had seen the marriage pageant in all its details over and over again. Rosa would have intervened; Rosa would have done what she could, but it was impossible that she alone could uphold Dorothy against all her relations and friends. No, Dorothy would yield; her face would be pale, and her sweet eyes red, but she would yield.

Then his door was opened, and Sir John Goldwin was admitted. Eustace, from his seat

by the window, stared at him in silence. Sir John, as he advanced across the room, was shocked at the young man's appearance. He was pale and unshaven, his cheeks had grown hollow, his hair, untied and unpowdered, hung loose about his face, his cravat was torn and awry, and he sat in an attitude of hopeless dejection. Sir John's easy, superficial sympathies were moved. "Alas, Captain Lackland," he began, "in what a condition do I find you——"

Eustace looked up at him with the dry, angry eyes of an entrapped animal.

"Forbear, sir," said he; "you have injured me enough. Spare me the insult of your pity. Look upon your work and be satisfied. You will do ill to stir my memory further."

Sir John stepped hurriedly back, and laid his hand upon a chair.

"Indeed, sir," said he hastily, "you mistake my motives. I come to set you free, to——"

Eustace interrupted him with a wild laugh, sprang to his feet, crying in a tone of derision, "Free!" and then covering his face with his hands, dropped it on the bar of the window.

Sir John stood aghast, and feared lest captivity had deprived the young gentleman of his reason. In a minute or so Eustace raised his face, and said with great precision and calmness: "Miss Dorothy Marlowe is then, I presume, married?"

"Married!" Repetition was Sir John's part now. "Good heavens! no. How should she be married? Miss Dorothy Marlowe is at my house waiting for you."

"At your house—waiting for *me*? Oh, am I mad, Sir John?"

"Nay, nay, my dear young friend," began Sir John, drawing nearer, "recover yourself. Miss Dorothy has come to London with your cousin Lady Silverlock. The parson is in readiness, and nothing hinders but that you may be married this afternoon."

Eustace moved a step or two unsteadily and sank into his chair again, grasping both its arms. Sir John hurried to the door and called for wine; but before the wine came the young man had looked up with a marvellous change of face, and stretching out his hand, seized Sir John's and wrung it heartily.

"Tell me, Sir John, tell me!" he cried; then suddenly breaking off, he passed his hand across his chin, and springing up, strode to a dingy mirror at the fireplace, where he gazed upon his image with an exclamation of dismay. Sir John, meanwhile, had poured out wine and brought it to him; it was accepted readily; and they hurried down to the carriage which was waiting, Sir John, meanwhile, pouring into the only half-attentive ears of Eustace the history of how he had deceived Miss Marlowe (who was now on her way into Devonshire), and had brought Dorothy to London, believing that her aunt had sent for her to be married.

At Lord Lackland's, they were informed that his lordship had been for the last week at Bath; a servant, however, still remained who was capable of finding a suit of Eustace's clothes, and of summoning a hairdresser. His toilet completed, the young gentleman was conveyed to Sir John's house, where he sprang up the broad staircase, three steps at a time, with an alacrity which his father would assuredly have blamed as unfashionable.

And so, late in a June afternoon, there was

a wedding in Sir John's drawing-room, and Sir John gave the bride to her husband, and Lady Silverlock stood on her other side, and took the first kiss from Dorothy Lackland.

VI.

It was the third day from the wedding of Dorothy and Eustace. Lord Lackland, coming to pay a visit to his daughter-in-law, was shown into a "morning parlour," and requested to wait a few minutes. The few minutes had not yet become many, when the door opened, and Lady Silverlock entered.

"What, you, Rosa? Is Dorothy not yet visible? She has been quick to assume the manners of a fine lady."

"Nay, uncle, 'tis the mantua-maker detains her. She is trying a ball-dress, for the first time in her life."

"Do not, I beg, disturb her occupation. I will wait upon Lady Millefoil at her *levée*, and return. But first let me express to you, Rosa, the infinite obligations of your family to you in this affair. She is still, I presume, quite ignorant of the trick played upon her?"

"Quite. Sir John, I believe, has acquainted her with the circumstance of her wealth, and they purpose to-morrow, or possibly to-night, to break to her the deception practised upon her aunt."

"It was an excellent device of Sir John, and excellently carried out. But the finest sport is to remark how our bridegroom has almost grown to believe himself in love with his heiress. You would swear they were nymph and swain out of a poetry-book. I protest the boy absolutely walks about smiling with inner satisfaction as if he had just won the great prize in the lottery."

He shrugged his shoulders, and, with a graceful bow, departed.

Lady Silverlock, being left alone, permitted her smile to fall away, and stood in the middle of the room meditating. Her face grew grave and hard. She murmured rather bitterly, "The great prize in the lottery!" Her smile came back at that, but it was neither a merry nor a pleasant smile, and her teeth were clenched together behind it.

Dorothy came in, looking fresh and bright,

and wearing that same little chintz gown which she had worn on the day when she had captivated Eustace in the Parsonage garden.

Lady Silverlock received her gaily. "What, Dorothy, already? How suits the dress?"

"The dress, Rosa, is entirely charming. I own that I felt a little child's delight in my fineries. I long to show myself in it to my husband."

"'My husband!' How she says it! Is there not therein also something of the child's delight in a new toy?"

Dorothy drew a long breath, and passed her two hands over her eyes. "Oh, Rosa," said she, softly, "I never knew till now how full of joy the world might be. I used to reckon myself happy in Rosedale, but that was to this as sleep to waking."

"Is the prospect of a title indeed so alluring?"

"Hush! you worldly-minded Rosa. There is but one title for which I care—that of my Eustace's chosen wife."

"Yes," said Rosa, smiling, "his chosen.

But who shall say what guides the choice of a man?"

"'Tis love, and when we say that we confess we know not what it is."

"Love, my dear, is hardly so powerful, out of the romances."

"What do you mean, Rosa? I am sure love can scarce be more powerful than that which rules *here*, and he—ah! I believe he loves me better yet."

"Still the Arcadian shepherdess, Dorothy? But tell me, what did you think of Lord Lackland?"

"He was all politeness and condescension. Yet——But tell me first: do *you* love your uncle very much?"

"My uncle is the cause that I am Lady Silverlock instead of being the wife of the man I loved. Need you ask further?"

"What, you, too, Rosa? He would have done so to Eustace, but Eustace was resolute. He told us in Devonshire. And I know too well whence proceeds his kindness to me. Sir John came to me yesterday evening, and told me—what, think you? That I am heiress

to I know not how much lands and money, but my aunt—my dear, wise aunt—has kept it a secret, lest I should become a prey to fortune-hunters. That I should be an heiress! 'Tis like a fairy tale. And he had informed Lord Lackland, who, *therefore*, was overjoyed that Eustace had married me."

"And yet, though you know this, you can talk still as if he had wooed you but for your bright eyes."

"I do not understand."

"Oh, innocent child that you are! 'Tis provoking to see such blindness in one of one's own sex. Could he, if he would, have married you penniless?"

"He loves me, Rosa --he loves me. 'Tis in vain to tell me of aught else."

"Now, of all the follies that make this world intolerable, is there any to compare with that of a lover who makes an angel from the commonest clay of man or woman? I tell you, Dorothy Lackland, if you persevere in thinking your fine captain husband a hero of romance you will but heap up a store of sorrow for yourself. Is it reasonable to think your man

will differ from the thousands round him? I have known Eustace from the cradle, and I tell you, constancy to one woman is not in him. You must not look for the impossible. He will, I dare say, be, notwithstanding, a complaisant husband."

"Complaisant!" cried Dorothy.

"Ay, my dear," returned Lady Silverlock, "and more than that no woman ought to cry out for."

"You know him not, Rosa, you know him not. You have *beheld* him, it may be, from his cradle, but you have never *seen* him yet."

"And have you, Dorothy, seen him? I would make experience easy for you, if you would let me. Have you seen the father, and yet believe in the son? Can you not read the future in the past? The father married a rich alderman's daughter, spent her fortune, flouted her family, and broke her heart. The son has married you. But she, indeed, was a fool who could never learn to accept her husband for what he was. I tell you, child, life, and in especial married life, is but a compromise, wherein the woman must give up much, and take

what she can in return. And how, if we shut our eyes to the failings of our opposite, shall we hope for a good bargain?"

"A bargain! But how simple I am! You are playing with me. I know you would not have me believe you."

"Indeed, Dorothy, I am in earnest. Nor are you so dull but that, having once heard me, your eyes will be opened in spite of yourself, and you will understand that your husband is but as other husbands, who love their wives' wealth better than their wives, and their own wills better than both."

Dorothy rose with some dignity.

"Enough, Lady Silverlock," said she; "I have been patient thus long, but I will bear no more. Were you ten times his kinswoman, I will not hear my husband slandered. You throw about false suspicions as the children in Rosedale throw burrs."

"'False suspicions,' say you? Would you have me prove them true?"

"You cannot."

"This grows earnest indeed. For my own honour it becomes me now to speak. Will you

condescend, my pretty blusterer, to look on this? But I forget—*you*, possibly, know not your husband's hand."

"I know it, I know it!" answered Dorothy, stretching out her hand for the letter. And she read those same words which Rosa had shown to Eustace in the churchyard: 'Whatever bars a hard fate may put between us, my heart is yours, unalterably and for ever.'

"Oh, 'tis false!" she cried. "It must be false!"

"Yet you turn pale. Your heart confesses."

"Oh, Eustace!" murmured Dorothy. And then, recovering herself, she demanded: "But why, why, if this were so, did you suffer him to marry me? 'Tis impossible."

"Your fortune was needed for the payment of his debts."

There was a brief pause.

"Take your letter, Lady Silverlock," said Dorothy, "and my farewell. From henceforth you can be no friend for me. Between you and me there can be nothing in common. I will therefore free you from my presence and withdraw."

"Stay, madam!" returned the other, reddening. "I will not drive you from your own apartment, nor force my company where I am told so plainly that 'tis unwelcome. The usages of the polite were not, I find, the usages of Rosedale. Make my excuses, I beg of you, to my cousin Eustace. I have the honour, Mrs. Lackland, to wish you a very good morning."

She swept a curtsey of most imposing character, to which Dorothy replied by a grave inclination of the head.

Dorothy, being left alone, gave way but for a few minutes to her first feeling of mere anger against Lady Silverlock. Her thoughts came back to their natural centre. 'A bar!' Was she a bar between Eustace and his wishes? No, no, she had not looked closely enough into the letter. There must have been some explanation, if she had but sought a little deeper. It was impossible; it was even laughable. At that came the reaction of doubt. For yet—yet—it was his handwriting. Was she, indeed, an obstacle in his path—a bar? The sincerity of her own nature protested.

She could not conceive that a man, loving one woman, should bring himself to marry another. And in a moment the remembrance of her own marriage promise rushed over her. Was she tempted already to doubt her husband? "Oh no," she murmured to herself, and smiled again. The dim instinct of recognition by which the truthful feel the truth or falsehood of their neighbours, told her that it was Eustace who was true to her, and Rosa who was false; and with this recognition came the conviction that he, whom she felt true, must be nearer to herself than he could be to her who was false. Her heart had never fully trusted Rosa—she knew that, now. She had crushed down her mistrust, but it had never been driven out, and now it had come forward and claimed its natural place. No, it was not in the power of such as Lady Silverlock to shake her faith in Eustace. She shook her head, smiling softly. She remembered that she had called these false suspicions, burrs, and resolved to brush them from her—belief, remembrance, all. But she felt that something of her lightheartedness went with them. She

could never be quite as young and joyous again. Deceit had come face to face with her, and the world in which she had met deceit was a graver world henceforth.

Eustace had gone out with Sir John (they were staying in Sir John's house still) to make some formal proof of the marriage, and set forth the claims of wife and husband to have Dorothy's fortune made over to them. They now returned, and found Dorothy sitting by herself in the morning parlour.

"Why, Dorothy," said Eustace, "I thought Rosa had been with you."

She looked up at him quickly. He could not tell what her look meant.

"She has gone," she answered. "She bade me make her excuses to you."

"'Twas unkind of her," said he, "to leave you alone."

"My own thoughts, Eustace," said Dorothy, "are better company to me than your cousin."

"How?" said Eustace, suddenly breathless and full of vague apprehensions.

But Sir John, with a self-satisfied smile, interposed,—

"Pardon me, Captain Lackland, if I presume to understand your lady's mind better than you do, but it seems to me that she pays a compliment to him of whom her thoughts are full."

Eustace's gratified smile at this interpretation sent a throb of additional reassurance to Dorothy's heart. She had, we know, assured herself already that all was well between Eustace and herself. Yet now, when he was actually beside her, and her heart should, it would have seemed, have been completely at peace, it was filled with aching tumult.

She put up her hand half timidly to his arm as he stood beside her.

"Would it indeed grieve you very much if I had quarrelled with your cousin?"

"She is my nearest kinswoman," he answered, with a little caressing touch upon the appealing hand. "She might do my wife some mischief with my friends. But sure, my love, 'tis not you're earnest?"

"She said things," Dorothy answered, looking down, "that your wife might not endure to hear."

"Confusion! What? What has she said?"

cried Eustace. The light touch upon her fingers became an alarmed grasp; she felt his hand grow hot and his arm tremble. His emotion, she could not tell why, eased her and made her happier.

"Nothing," she answered, "that I will suffer myself to remember. You must not put me to the pain of repetition. She wounded me; I will not suffer it to rankle. Dear Eustace, can you not trust your wife to believe in you?"

At his name she looked up, and still keeping her eyes on him, rose and stood opposite to him. His face was troubled, but she knew quite clearly that it was not his love for her which was the doubtful thing.

"You are too good for me, Dorothy," he murmured. "I am but a poor rascal for a woman to trust in. And yet trust me, dear, all the same. The future shall be better than the past."

"I have no claim," she answered softly, "on your past. But you love me now?"

"From the deepest foundation," he answered, "of my soul."

"I am satisfied," said she. "I am always

satisfied when I hear your voice. But we are forgetful of Sir John." And turning to him, who was walking to and fro at the other end of the room, singing an air and admiring his shoe buckles, "Is it not strange, dear sir," said she, "that we have yet no message from my aunt?"

"We shall hear, I doubt not, to-morrow," he replied.

Eustace, on his other side, plucked him by the sleeve. "To-morrow? Nay, tell her to-day," he whispered; "she has heard something already."

Sir John slightly shook his head, and put him aside. "Lord Lackland, madam," said he, "will be here, presently, to pay his compliments to his new daughter. He has never, I believe, had so exalted an opinion of his son as since he has seen how lovely a bride has bestowed her hand on him."

Dorothy's smile had a touch of sarcasm in it.

"It is not surprising," said Eustace, "that you should raise my value with others. You have raised it with myself."

She drew herself up, and put on a little air of

severity. "Go, Captain Lackland," said she, "I will not be flattered. 'Tis scarce three days, sir, since you vowed to honour me, and sure I am that we honour not those whom we flatter."

She turned from them and went to a harpsichord that stood in the room. Turning the leaves of the music, she touched a note or two, till presently she struck an air.

Sir John meanwhile was expressing to Eustace, almost with tears in his eyes, his admiration of her goodness and beauty.

"She is indeed," said he, "a sweet creature, and if you deserve the name of man you will be a good husband to her."

"I will, Sir John, trust me; I will," said Eustace.

Sir John pressed his hand, and told him he believed him.

Alas for the value of good resolutions! It must have been at about the same minute that Lady Silverlock, from her sedan chair, caught sight of a familiar figure striding along the street. She waved her hand from the window, and cried aloud, "Dr. Barnard! Dr. Barnard!"

The good doctor—for he it certainly was—stopped and turned, and then approached rapidly.

"Lady Silverlock!" cried he. His face darkened, and he asked hoarsely, "What have you done with Dorothy?"

"She is at Sir John Goldwin's. Oh, Dr. Barnard, do not look at me like that. Indeed I meant no harm; I believed that Miss Marlowe was here. I have only just learnt the truth, and I was on my way now to acquaint my lawyer, and put her at once into safe hands. It is that vile Sir John. My cousin was in his power; he owed him hundreds of pounds, and Dorothy's fortune was to pay them. Oh, how glad am I to see you—a woman is so helpless! You are going now to Sir John's? I will return. They would be capable, I believe, of shutting you out. You will follow my chair, will you not?"

He nodded silently, overwhelmed by the confirmation of his fears, and they turned back towards the house in which Dorothy, Eustace, and Sir John were passing their time so unsuspiciously.

Dorothy had now fixed on a melody which she seemed to play with some significance. Eustace recognised it, and, going to her, asked with some surprise if this were among her songs.

"It has run in my head," she answered, "this half-hour. Do *you* know it?" She turned a mischievous look upon him.

"I have heard it," he answered, "many a time. I cannot sing it you, but would you have me repeat its declaration?"

She nodded very slightly. "Indeed, I believe it might be salutary."

"Hear me, then, but do not, I beseech you, think me a Captain Macheath." And standing before her, half in earnest, half in jest, he repeated the verses of the song, which was that from the *Beggar's Opera*:—

"'Cease your funning,
Force nor cunning
Never shall my heart trepan.
All the sallies
Are but malice
To seduce (your) constant man.
'Tis most certain
By their flirting

Women oft have envy shown,
Pleased to ruin
Others' wooing,
Never happy in their own.' "

Sir John applauded loudly. Dorothy looked up into her husband's face, and said, very seriously, "Amen!"

"Amen, indeed, with all my heart," answered he.

The words had scarcely left his lips when a servant came in.

"Sir," said he to his master, "Lady Silverlock and Dr. Barnard——" "Are below," he would doubtless have added, but Sir John interrupted him.

"Perdition!" cried he. "Fool! dolt! Did I not tell you to deny me?"

"Yes, sir, but my lady said——"

"No matter; the gentleman cannot be admitted."

But Dorothy had heard and risen.

'Dr. Barnard," said she: "is it Dr. Barnard?"

"Yes, madam," said the man.

"Nay, pardon me, Sir John; I must see Dr.

Barnard. Who knows? Perhaps my aunt is ill."

"They are come up, sir," said the servant, all abashed.

There was indeed a rustle and a sound of steps at the door.

"They are here," said Dorothy, and went forward, breathless, exclaiming, "Oh, my dear Dr. Barnard, how rejoiced I am to see you——"

She stopped short, seeing his muddy and disordered dress, his uncurled wig, and countenance full of alarm and agitation.

Eustace put up his hand to his eyes, and uttered a low groan of remorse and misery.

"Dorothy!" cried Dr. Barnard, "are you married?"

"Yes, three days ago," she repeated in amazement.

"Heaven forgive me!" cried he. "Oh, my child, my poor, poor child, I should have been more careful! And they would have denied you to me, would have thrust me out, but that Lady Silverlock saw me, and brought me in. Oh, my Dorothy, we have been deceived—

grossly, wilfully deceived! Your aunt never consented to your marriage—your aunt never sent for you. The letter was all a forgery—she was on her way home all the time."

"How? Who, then——?" said Dorothy, and turned her eyes to Eustace. Her voice died on her lips at the sight of his face, and she caught Dr. Barnard's hand.

"But he?" she murmured, "he?"

"He is but an abject fortune-hunter, a debtor, an adventurer——"

Sir John Goldwin here interrupted.

"Sir, sir, your sacred office gives you many privileges, but beware lest you exceed them! Captain Lackland is a gentleman of known repute——"

"Ay, indeed, sir," returned the doctor, sternly, "so I find since I have come to London;" and turning from him to Rosa, "Oh, madam! madam, why had not you the womanliness to save this innocent child?"

"Dr. Barnard!" cried Sir John, "will you not hear reason? The deceit, such as it is, is mine. 'Twas I induced Captain Lackland to go to Devonshire; I described to him the

lady; I sent the letters in Miss Marlowe's name; but I dispute entirely that the young lady has been wronged. Her aunt has an unreasoning dread of false lovers; she knows nothing of the world; she would not hear of Captain Lackland; she would not consider her niece's inclination; she would have forced her to marry a man with whom she could never have been happy. The marriage has been of my contriving; I glory in it, and protest I think the lady owes me thanks. But if, indeed, there is aught of blame in the matter, 'tis to me that it belongs, and not to her husband. He, I dare say, made no pretence to you of wealth——"

"He never told me, sir," interrupted the doctor, "that he owed hundreds of pounds to you."

"To me?" murmured Sir John, confused.

"Ay, to you, false guardian that you are—you, the one man to whom Miss Marlowe trusted the knowledge of her niece's wealth!"

"Oh, Sir John!" cried Dorothy, "Sir John, surely this is not true! Tell me, tell me——"

She looked from one to the other, but no one seemed likely to answer her.

"It is true," said Eustace.

A voice said with quiet emphasis, "Fool!" and Lady Silverlock, who alone had attention to spare, observed that Lord Lackland had come in.

To Dorothy, Eustace's confession, following upon Rosa's words of an hour earlier, was the confession of much more besides. Everything seemed at an end for her. The whole world crumbled about her.

"True!" she cried, and the cry went home to Eustace's conscience like an arrow. "You knew it when you came? You came for that?"

She turned from one to another, seeking some shelter of belief. From Eustace she looked to Sir John, and half uttered his name, but answered herself with "Oh, but you, too," and turning back to Eustace, "and *you*—oh, and Rosa, you—the letter, too—I understand! Oh misery, misery!"

By "the letter" she meant of course Eustace's letter to Rosa, the one unpardonable and incurable wound; but Eustace, and all of

them, except Rosa, supposed that she spoke of the false letter from her aunt, in which Eustace had had in fact no hand, though, having profited by it, he could not excuse himself.

Dr. Barnard endeavoured to soothe her, calling her his daughter, and bidding her be brave.

"Dorothy," pleaded Eustace, "my wife—hear me but one word——"

Their words did not seem to reach her. Wringing her hands, she cried out,—

"Tricked, tricked, and made a dupe of! Won by a few false words! Robbed of all that makes life good! Take me away, Dr. Barnard. Hide me where no one knows."

He put his arms around her, and she hid her face, weeping.

"You shall come back, my dear," said Dr. Barnard, "to your own home, where every one loves and honours you."

Lord Lackland interposed. "By your leave, Dr. Barnard, the lady is my son's wife, and her home is with him."

"No, no!" cried Dorothy, "not that—not now! Rather let me die."

She turned round with a face of terror, clinging to Dr. Barnard's arm.

Eustace, when he saw her shrink back thus, could as soon have struck her as have urged any right to hold her. He saw in her feeling an impassable gulf opened between them, and knew that she was lost to him.

"Father," said he, "this is my affair. Let no other intermeddle. You need not fear, Dorothy, I make no claim upon you, I have lost the right. I acknowledge all that you accuse me of."

The words fell chill upon her ears. She remembered that he had called her a bar between him and Rosa, and believed that he was not sorry to let her go.

The despairing acknowledgment seemed to Dr. Barnard almost more shameless than a denial.

"And you could come, sir," said he, "like a wolf into the fold, to make ravage of this innocent lamb, to steal into an honest man's household, and plunder a defenceless girl, without mercy and without remorse."

"No, not without remorse." Eustace hardly

knew whether he spoke the words, or whether it was only within his heart that they were uttered so loudly.

"Had you no thought of her aunt—of that worthy and honourable lady, coming home to find her hearth desolate, and her child stolen from her?"

"My aunt!" cried Dorothy. "Oh, Dr. Barnard, what said my aunt?"

"Nay, my dear, her heart is well-nigh broken. She lies at home, ill."

"Let us go to her," said Dorothy eagerly; but she stopped herself. "There is something else. I know not what I would say."

The look of search and doubt upon her face alarmed Dr. Barnard.

"There is nothing else, my dear. Come. Remember we are going to your aunt."

He tried to draw her towards the door. It was more than Eustace could bear. Springing forward, he called her by her name. He held out his hands to her, and would have flung himself at her feet. The world seemed to turn round. He scarcely knew what he did.

"Stop! Don't come near me!" she cried.

He shrank back and paused, not daring to look up and meet in her eyes the horror and aversion of her voice.

Almost instantly she spoke again. Her tone was perfectly calm and steady, and her face was like it.

"You have wronged me more, I think, than any woman was ever wronged before. I make no reproaches to you; but grant me this, the one last request I shall ever make of you—not to come near me, not to see my face, ever, again. You have the money that you sought me for—let me go."

She moved slowly towards the door. Eustace's eyes, his very life, it seemed to him, followed her. Yet he knew, beyond all hope, that nothing he could say or do would reach her. His one thought was to hold her to the last moment in his sight.

She was gone, and his senses seemed to forsake him. He sank back into a chair. It was that from which she had risen at the harpsichord. He dropped his face upon his arms, his arms across the keys that she had touched. He loathed and abhorred himself;

his soul cried out within him for some way of reparation, but there was none. He had bound her, but he could not set her free. Oh, if she had but been penniless!

"Sir John," said Lord Lackland, "one word. The money remains his?"

"Oh, yes, my lord. I was careful for my own sake to see the articles drawn."

"For my part," said Lord Lackland, "I think the boy is well rid of his clog. And the aunt has more than enough for both. What should a couple of women do with so much wealth?"

With this reflection, he offered Sir John his snuff-box and withdrew.

Sir John could not be quite so philosophical. He shook his head, and wished that he had never meddled in the affair. He sighed, and wondered why these young people could not be reasonable and take things in a lower key. Then he murmured in his cravat a curse which could not be said aloud, because it was meant for Lady Silverlock, to whom he attributed the whole disturbance, and who was still in the room.

He went to Eustace and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"Captain Lackland," said he.

But Captain Lackland, springing up in a fury, was so uncivil as to call him "Satan," and to declare in unmeasured terms that his temptations were to blame for all this.

"Oh, your servant, Captain Lackland! As you please! 'Tis not every young man thinks a rich wife's fortune so ill a gift." And he flung out of the room, greatly affronted.

Eustace stood in the middle of the room, looking like a person started up from a dream. A new thought had possession of him. He remembered that if he were dead, Dorothy would be free. He suffered the door to close upon Sir John. He had forgotten Rosa, and he did not look round. She, standing in a corner, held her breath and trembled. He stood still for a moment, hearing Sir John's steps depart, then with a cry of "Dorothy!" snatched at his sword.

There was another cry, a wild rush, a hand upon his arm, and another on his sword hilt.

"Cousin!" cried Rosa.

"Give me my sword!" cried Eustace, and pushing her roughly from him, wrested himself free.

"Eustace! Eustace!" she cried, flinging herself before him and winding her arms about him. "For her sake, Eustace: think of the pain to her—the scandal!"

Maddened as he was, that argument reached him. He dropped his sword into its sheath, and for a moment reflected. Then, "There's war again," he murmured.

His face cleared a little. "Yes, you are right. There are better ways than that."

He freed himself from her grasp, raised her, and turned away. She burst into questions, expostulations, and reproaches.

He replied with a voice and smile that seemed to be not his own, but his father's: "You have taught me, Lady Silverlock, that an unloving wife may be made a cheerful widow. I hope to improve the example. You can tell my father, if he asks for me, that I go to offer my sword as a volunteer in his Majesty's service."

She was impressed—as she had always been

impressed by his father—and made no effort to stop him. He went, and she was left alone, to recognise that she had not divided her cousin one whit more irretrievably from Dorothy than from herself.

IX.

Of the dangers of the campaign which followed it is not necessary to speak in detail. Sickness and the chances of war devastated the English ranks, but Eustace was always among those who escaped. The desperation which drove him into the most dangerous situations won for him the renown of reckless intrepidity. In truth his only moments of forgetfulness were those spent in the hurry and tumult of battle. Then, only, did his life seem to have some flavour in it, and the joy of action returned to him.

He left England in July, and after having endured, without ill effect, the hardships and privations of the winter, he fell a victim to a kind of low fever that was very prevalent in the camp. This, he thought, would put an end to him, for he was resolved not to recover.

But he had not reckoned for the contradictions that might work in his own soul. No sooner did his fever begin to be alarming than his whole course of thought centred itself round the burning desire of seeing Dorothy again. And as it is said that the longings of a mother will keep alive her dying child, so, Eustace verily believed, did the eagerness of his desire keep alight the well-nigh extinguished spark of his life. He battled through his sickness, and began to make progress towards his usual health. But the wish born of his fever grew beyond it, and gathered strength. He began to think that he *could* not die until he had seen Dorothy. At Fontenoy a ball struck his horse beneath him. As he fell, he thought, "Now is all over!" With the thought, Dorothy's face sprang up before him. He wrenched himself free from his entanglement, struggling as eagerly for life as a few minutes before he had courted death.

This event gave him food for reflection. He reminded himself that nearly a year had gone by, that he was still alive, and beginning, in spite of his resolve, to cherish a desire which

could only be satisfied by retaining his hold on life. But this desire became more and more irresistible. It grew to be like the influence of a spell. At last, in obedience to an over-mastering hunger, he gave up his command, and yielded to the force that drew him home. He landed at Harwich, and made his way at once to Rosedale. He closed his last day's journey at the next preceding stage, where he slept, and in the morning walked to the village.

Early in the same day, another visitor stood waiting in the trim drawing-room of Dorothy's cottage for her to appear. This was no other than Sir John Goldwin; but he had not given his name, feeling convinced that if he did so she would refuse to see him.

She came in, wearing a black dress—for her aunt had died six months previously—advanced a step or two before she recognised him, and then stood still. Sir John went forward, saying quickly: "Madam, forgive me for coming to you. My errand is a serious one."

Dorothy put out her hand to the nearest piece of furniture.

"Is he dead?" she asked faintly.

Sir John in that moment was certain that she still loved her husband.

"Nay, madam," said he, "nay; but he is as good as dead, since he cares but to throw away his life. Such deeds of daring have not been known since the days of the seven champions. You may be proud of your husband, Mrs. Lackland, since 'tis you who are the cause of his bravery."

Dorothy threw up her head with a little scornful movement of denial.

"Your cruelty and his unhappiness are the cause," persisted Sir John. "His life is a burden upon him, which he strives to cast away; and it is a burden because his wife rejects him."

"Sir John Goldwin," said Dorothy, "you have no right to speak to me of these matters. I have no husband."

Sir John was struck by the change which had made the shy girl of a year ago into a somewhat imperious woman who would clearly bear no dictation. The change irritated him. He began to see that reconciliation was not so easy a task as he had thought. He

grew hot, and spoke sharply. "Beware, madam. One day that will be true, and you will reckon up with tears the days when you might have had your husband with you and drove him from you."

Dorothy, apparently unmoved, asked, "Are you his messenger?"

"No; I come of my own motion, out of a pure desire for the happiness of both."

She looked at him doubtfully, and paused an instant. "Then, sir," said she, finally, "learn from me that Captain Lackland's happiness is best served by his absence from me, and that nothing could more discompose him than his wife's forgiveness."

"You do him wrong; upon my soul you do!" cried Sir John. "Do you not know that when you left him he laid hands upon himself, and would have shed his own blood, under my very roof? do you know that, madam? If it had not been for the intervention of Lady Silverlock he would have laid himself a corpse on my threshold."

"Lady Silverlock is fortunate in her interventions on his behalf," said Dorothy bitterly;

"but these histories, sir, are of no interest to me. If this is all your business with me, I will take leave to withdraw."

"Stay, madam, stay!" said Sir John. "I am an old man—old enough to be your father, and I have travelled hither from London expressly to see you. I think the lady whom I knew last year would not have refused to hear me."

She came forward a little, and sat down in silence.

"My first errand," continued Sir John, "is one that is not easy from the old to the young, nor from a man to a woman. I come to acknowledge my wrongs towards you, and humbly to ask your pardon."

"Sir John——" she began.

"You are seeking a phrase to tell me that you can never pardon. But pause a moment, and hear me out. When I entered upon the scheme which appears to you so villainous, I had—I swear to you that I had—no thought of fixing a lasting sorrow upon you. I believed that any young lady would be happy to find herself the wife of Captain Lackland, and would

be ready at a word to pardon those little deceptions which are incident to the course of courtship. I never dreamed that a delicate female heart could be capable of such severity; I looked for tears and recriminations and speedy forgiveness. If I had guessed that I was preparing for Captain Lackland despair, remorse, and a disgust for life, I would have burned every bond for his debts sooner than have sent him into Devonshire. Do you believe me, madam?"

"Yes," she answered, sighing, "I believe you. You knew not what love means, and how should you know that you might break my heart?"

"You pardon me?"

"Oh yes! I pardon you."

"And him? His wrongdoing was less than mine, and his punishment ten thousandfold heavier."

"On this matter, Sir John, I cannot speak to you."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Sir John, "what should a woman want? Is he not young, brave, handsome? Did he not adore

you? Why, half the women in London would rejoice to change places with you. Give me leave, madam, to tell you, that as men go in these days, your husband is one in a thousand. You, in your Devonshire village, have lived so ignorant of the world that you expect a hero of romance, who will sigh for you through a dozen volumes; but take my word for it, there are not many men who would sigh, as he has done, twelve months for an obdurate wife. Do you know that, if he would, he could enforce your return to him? Do you forget that it is to his forbearance you owe your freedom? And, upon my soul, his forbearance is but a folly. He should come home to you and claim you. 'Tis a romantic and ridiculous scruple that keeps him at a distance. But have a care, madam, have a care! The heart of man will not be for ever constant to a memory. He will seek other consolations, and cease to trouble himself about you. You will be left to your petulant solitude, a widow without a widow's privilege."

"Enough, Sir John," said Dorothy. "Have you come hither to insult me under my own

roof, to remind me that indeed I lack a husband for my protection?"

She spoke quietly and sadly. Sir John was repentant in a moment.

"Nay, my dear, nay. I ask your pardon. I was too warm. But upon my soul it angers me to see two young people, framed for each other, wasting their lives in unhappiness for the sake of a trivial dissension. I am sure that in the bottom of your heart you love him still. Can you deny it? Nay, you cannot. Why, then, do you shut your doors upon him? Do you not know he loved you?"

Dorothy could bear no more. The barrier of calmness broke down: "No, no, never!" she cried, vehemently.

"How?" murmured Sir John.

"He never loved me. Oh! if he had—then indeed—— Go, sir! You have come here to play upon a solitary woman's weakness, and I have betrayed it to you. Yes, it is true. I love him. But you may tell him that I will never receive him, never willingly hear his name, and never suffer it to cross my lips. That is my last message to him."

"Mrs. Lackland," replied Sir John, solemnly, "I am not your husband's messenger. I have told you already that I come at my own motion. But I come because I know his affection for you, and I hoped that I might mediate between you. He is in England—we know that he has landed—but he is not in London. He came towards the west without staying a day in town. Why should he come to Devonshire unless to see you?"

A very bitter smile crossed her face as she replied, "Shall I tell you why, Sir John? Lady Silverlock is staying a mile off."

"Lady Silverlock!" repeated Sir John, taken aback. "But after all, madam, what has Lady Silverlock to do with the matter? She would be glad, I doubt not, to do you an ill turn; but what power has she, if you should choose to be reconciled to your husband?" Something in the fixed hostility of her face suggested a new thought. "Surely you cannot dream," cried he, "that he loved Lady Silverlock?"

"It is no dream. I know it, too well."

"Ay, at nineteen. But that was at an end

years before he saw your face. Why, she was free; he could have married her if he would. Do you think she would have suffered him to marry you if she had had hopes for herself?"

"Sir John," said Dorothy, rising, "I begin to believe that you did not know all, and that you are indeed desirous of serving me. I thank you; but my case is beyond the help of your endeavour. You cannot know, I think, that at the very time when he was wooing me he was writing love letters to her."

"'Tis false! 'Tis impossible!"

"I saw the letter. There is no error. The words of it are burnt into my brain."

Sir John walked to and fro in the room greatly disturbed, muttering, "To her! To Lady Silverlock! Sure, 'tis incredible! And yet—yet"—stopping short, and facing her—"I maintain, madam, that he adored you. But the heart of man is a strange thing, and full of contradictions. Mrs. Lackland, do not let us conclude hastily. This may be so, and yet your husband's heart may have been yours. It *was* yours, I would stake my existence upon it. But a man, my dear lady, cannot refuse

the love of a woman when she forces it upon him. He cannot answer otherwise than with some semblance of regard. Nay, indeed, he cannot fail to feel it. His protestations, it may be, were for her, but his love was for you. Do not suffer an offended female pride to stand between you. Remember, remember, that you, too, took a marriage vow, and that you are not keeping it."

"A vow!" cried Dorothy; "a vow to honour! Is it my fault that the vow cannot be kept? Oh, Sir John, cease to torture me. I am a very ignorant girl, as you have told me; I know nothing of the world and the ways of men. But this, at least, my own heart tells me, that 'tis a mockery to man and to Heaven to live as if I believed and trusted where I know that I am betrayed. If he had been true to me, then, though he had had all other faults, though he had been a gamester, a drunkard, I might have clung to him. But to take a share in his falsehood, to cling to the sign and show of marriage, when its soul is wanting—I would die sooner."

Sir John was moved, and a littleimpressed.

Yet his conviction was not shaken that there was some misunderstanding at the root of the separation.

"But if I could prove to you that it was not so?" said he. "If I could prove to you that his heart was yours?"

"Ah, if you could! But that is a knowledge which I shall not have on this side heaven. No, nor there neither. Sir John, if you would not kill me, I beseech you to leave me. Indeed I am grateful to you. I have shown you more of my heart than I have shown to any other creature, but I can bear no more. Farewell!" She held out her hand without looking up. Sir John took it a little reluctantly. "Farewell!" said he, "and if ever you need a friend——"

"I will reckon you as one. But never, never come to me again on this errand."

She stood still for a few minutes after he left her; her head was bowed down and her hands clenched; she was fighting hard against the hysteric impulse to break into violent sobbing. Her will was the stronger; she presently lifted her head and opened her eyes;

her face, however, was extremely pale, and she moved but slowly. Sighing once or twice, she went out into the morning parlour, where her hat lay on a table beside a half-filled basket of roses. She looked at them as if they had grown strange to her, then slowly put on her hat, took up her basket, and went forth again to go on clipping her roses.

It was nearly noon when Eustace reached the cottage. The day was the anniversary of their marriage. He had no thought—or at least he believed that he had none—of any possible reconciliation. The thing in his heart was to see her and hear her speak, and go away and kill himself. The weight of existence, in spite of those frantic struggles to preserve it, had become intolerable. The daily reflection that his life was a continuing bondage for Dorothy was a torture. That self-destruction might be a sin involving future punishment he was ready enough to suppose; but since the punishment would fall upon him, he was willing, and indeed eager, to encounter it by way of atonement to Dorothy.

The fields all smelt of hay, and he saw no

one in the houses; everybody had gone to work while the fine weather lasted. The door of Miss Marlowe's cottage stood half open. He slipped in, his heart beating. Before him was the door of the room into which he had once come with Dorothy and Charlotte. It was unlatched. He listened; all was still. He ventured into the room, and found it empty. The long window stood wide. There was an open work-basket in a corner. A book lay on the table, with a ribbon in it to mark the place.

He stood gazing at everything, feeling on everything the breath of her presence.

"Dorothy!" cried a voice from without. "Dorothy!"

It was Charlotte's voice. Eustace was instantly recalled to himself. He must not—he could not—be detected thus by Charlotte. He looked round for a way of retreat, and observing that there were long curtains pushed back from the window, hastily concealed himself between the wall and their heavy folds.

Charlotte came in.

"Dorothy!" she repeated. "Dorothy! Are you here?"

From the garden came a voice that thrilled Eustace's every nerve.

"Charlotte, is that you? I will come in, my dear."

He heard her step upon the path, then the rustle of her dress in the window as she passed in, hardly a foot from him; yet he could neither see her, nor touch her.

"I have been clipping my roses," said she. "See, let me give you some." And Eustace perceived a scent of roses that came creeping amid the folds of the curtain. "How is your husband? And his good mother—is she better?"

"Her cough is much abated, I am thankful to say," answered Charlotte. "And you, my Dorothy?"

"I am well, Charlotte. But why, my dear, do you question it? Have you ever known me to be otherwise?"

There was a graver tone in her voice—a tone that sounded saddened and restrained. Eustace, moved almost beyond self-control, pressed his arms and face against the wall, and wished that he were indeed lying under the new-turned sods at Fontenoy.

Charlotte, he fancied, took her hand.

"You are brave, Dorothy, I know, but your cheek confesses to a change, and your steps are slower than they were."

"We grow older, Charlotte. You and I will be old women shortly."

"Will we, Dorothy? Not I, thank you, at two-and-twenty. You must have a care how you speak thus before Lucinda; she would be mortally affronted."

She laughed a little, to draw a laugh from Dorothy, but Eustace heard none. Perhaps she smiled, but if so the smile can hardly have been very joyous, or Charlotte would not have replied to it as she did.

"Why do you not own to your Charlotte," said she, "that you are unhappy? Your heart would be the easier for it, and mine aches to see you silent."

"I would not have it do so," Dorothy answered. "Believe me, mine aches not—much."

"The last word," said Charlotte, "holds all. I would not torment you, only—to-day—I cannot help thinking——"

"Hush, Charlotte!" said Dorothy, swiftly. "Pardon me, dear, but I cannot endure a reference to that day."

For a moment neither of them spoke.

"You have put on your wedding ring again," said Charlotte.

Eustace's heart leapt up within him.

"Of what avail was it to put it by?" said Dorothy. "The fetter is there still."

"Dorothy," began her friend once more, "I have news for you."

"What news?" she asked. Her voice was steady, but it seemed to Eustace to be full of terror.

"Nay, my dear, you tremble. Only this: some of the troops are returning to England, and Captain Lackland with them. He has won great honour by his bravery."

"Was he wounded?" asked Dorothy.

"No, I think not. 'Tis said he will be much advanced."

"I am glad to hear of his prosperity," said Dorothy.

"And now," pursued Charlotte, "silence me if you will—I know I have no right to

ask—how, Dorothy, if he should come to you?"

Eustace listened, trembling, for her reply. Yet he felt with shame that he should not be here. He quieted his conscience with the excuse that by to-morrow all memories would be over for him, and that it would not matter whether he had heard or not heard anything.

Dorothy's answer was not what he had looked for.

"Had you any cause," said she, somewhat sternly, "to put the question? You have seen him, Charlotte?"

"No," said Charlotte, "I have not seen him; I know nothing of him."

"He will not come," said Dorothy. "And if he should, it could avail nothing. But why, my dear, would you look into the dark corners of my heart? When does Lucinda return from Bath?"

Charlotte replied with extracts from Lucinda's letters, dealing chiefly with fashions of dresses and mantles. Dorothy answered gaily enough, but stopped suddenly. "Listen! there is a step in the garden."

"'Tis, no doubt, my father," said Charlotte; and in the next moment Eustace heard Dorothy addressing Dr. Barnard by name. She reproached him playfully for not having been to see her for nearly a week, and he answered in the same tone, that the loss was on his side.

"And you, Dorothy, will you not come over this afternoon to the vicarage and give Prissy and me your company? We are becoming quite grave and gloomy old people now that Charlotte has deserted us, and Lucinda has gone gadding with her cousins."

She thanked him, but would not come to-day —to-morrow, if he would.

The Doctor then drew her a little aside, and so brought her unawares close to Eustace: "My love," said he, "has Charlotte told you any news of Captain Lackland?"

"Yes, sir."

"And now, Dorothy, this is your wedding-day. I would not extenuate the faults of which he was guilty towards you, but he is your husband still. He has distinguished himself greatly by his bravery abroad. Would it not

be well, if it were possible, for you to be together?"

"Do not ask me, Dr. Barnard. It is impossible."

"You are implacable, Dorothy."

"Nay, I hope not. I wish him well; I shall always rejoice to hear of his successes, but I will never, with my good will, see his face again. I have heard that a released galley-slave can never bear the face of his bench comrade. 'Tis not the man he loathes so deeply, but the chain. And I cannot—oh, I cannot. You did not know all."

"It must be as you choose, Dorothy. My conscience bade me say so much."

"I know. Indeed I am not ungrateful for all your goodness. To-day you must forgive me if I am grave and sad. To-morrow I will come to the vicarage, if you will permit me, and bring my harpsichord music, and you must get your violin, and we will give Prissy a concert."

"You are a good girl, Dorothy, to be so mindful of the old man's pleasures," he answered; and the tone suddenly recalled to

Eustace all that past, which was really but a year old, though it seemed to have its place in another life.

Dr. Barnard and Charlotte took leave. Dorothy accompanied them to the garden gate, and Eustace came out into the room. She had laid down her hat and her basket of roses. Her glove was beside them, warm from her hand. Eustace took it up. "Could it hurt her," he asked himself, "that it should lie with him in his grave?" Then, recollecting that she would be alarmed if she should return and find him here, he stepped out into the garden, and lurked behind the bushes till he had seen her re-enter at the window.

He, too, advanced and softly followed her in.

She had seated herself. Her back was towards him. He saw that her dress was black. Her attitude was dejected. After a moment she sighed deeply and rose, like a person resolved to put away thought.

"Dorothy," said Eustace.

She started towards him, her hands clasping each other, and his name upon her lips. Her face was thinner, older, yet it appeased his

dream all the more fully; it was this that he had desired, though he had never seen it.

She drew quickly back. "Why do you seek me?" she asked. "Was it not the one condition——"

"I know it. 'Tis not to force myself upon you that I come, but to speak to you once more—to make your freedom sure for ever. I know that my very sight is abhorrent to you, but bear with me this once. I will be brief. I had thought before this to be lying on a German battlefield."

She turned away, and he could not restrain the outcry of his pain.

"Oh, misery! that we should meet thus!"

"Why did you come?" said she, her face still averted; "you knew it must be so."

"Yes, I knew that," he answered. "I know all that lies between us—know it with more bitter shame and regret than even you. I do not come now to offer excuse or proffer hollow plans for bridging over a gulf that never can be bridged. I know—oh! I know—that my own baseness has put me apart from you for ever. Never again, while I live, can I hope

for the touch of your hand in mine, or the frank meeting of your eyes full of faith in me and of hope. I have wronged you (I know it now, though I did not feel it as I did it) in almost every point that a man can wrong a woman. I deceived you, I blighted your first love, I left you bound, in name at least, to a most unworthy husband. I know it all now, and the knowledge is punishment enough, for I loved you—through all, in spite of all, I loved you, and nothing I can do can take away the past. I may die of grief, but I cannot give you back the peace and the happy faith that I have ruined, or wipe out of your life the agony of finding yourself my wife——"

"Let the past be," said Dorothy; "you have done for me what you could."

"No, there is more yet. You are bound to me still by a name."

"No matter; let it be," she said quickly.

"I come to offer you your freedom, to tell you that the marriage—which was no marriage for you, since you meant to take an honest man—shall be dissolved."

"Dissolved!" cried Dorothy. Her calm

voice changed to a note of sudden feeling, a light sprang to her eyes, and a slow glow spread over her cheeks. To Eustace the change spoke of joy in the prospect of emancipation. He could hardly master himself to reply.

"Yes," said he, "you shall be free in the sight of Heaven and of men—free to make a happier marriage, to forget me. . . . Oh, Heaven! . . . from to-day you shall never see my face again."

"Do you mean this?" asked Dorothy.

"You may well distrust me. I am in earnest this time."

"Separated!" she repeated. "Set free!"

"As free as before my shadow darkened your path."

She stood looking before her, and her face betrayed perplexity.

"But you said once," said she, "that only death could part us now."

"Ah, yes, poor fool!—in hope! How blind hope is! Are we not parted already by more than death? If we might but have died together then!"

"What!" said she, "have you thought that, too?"

No reproach could have pierced him like the confession in those words.

"You shall not need to look forward again to death," said he; "I will go now and return no more. Yet—I am going away from you now for ever. You loved me once. Let me take with me your forgiveness to comfort me when —when I come to die. Will you, Dorothy? 'Tis much, I know, to ask, but for the sake of those first days when you loved me—your forgiveness, and one kiss. I am your husband still."

For, now that his wish of seeing her had been granted, a second rose in its place, as is the way with human wishes.

"Oh! I forgive you," said Dorothy; "I forgave you long ago."

"And the other, Dorothy? We are parting —the last time."

"Stay," said she, "tell me first——" Then, suddenly turning from him, "But oh, how can you come to me thus to torture me? I knew, I knew how it would be. Could you not

have written? Could you not have spared me this?"

"What?" said Eustace, completely at a loss. This unlooked-for change in the midst of her gentler mood amazed and bewildered him.

"Was it not enough," cried she,—"oh, Heaven! was it not enough to know that we were divided, without your coming here to speak smooth words to me again and wake up all that past? I was at peace—why could you not let me be?"

"I did not mean to trouble you, Dorothy, said Eustace humbly. "I did not understand——"

"No, no, how should you understand? There lies the pain—the intolerable sting. To have given all—all! And that *you*, you upon whom I hung all my hopes, should be able to come to me with graceful speeches and proffered hopes for the future. Am I blind, do you suppose? What have I to gain by any further separation? Marriage, forsooth! But you men think marriage, to a woman, what a doll is to a child—enough to still all tears. There is no further marriage in this world for me.

My story has been told. But you—you have returned with new honours, and your cousin loves you. I can understand that—that it may be hard for you to be bound to a wife."

"For me! Nay, Dorothy, you must not so misunderstand me——"

"Spare me the protestations. You forget that I have seen your letter to Lady Silverlock. Go—oh, go! Do what you will, but—but for the sake of Heaven, spare me the sight of your face—the sound of your voice."

"Your letter to Lady Silverlock?" What was this? He raised his head, ready with an eager denial. But before she paused, another thought had come. Why clear himself of this one thing more? Would it not make the future easier for her to think him as black as possible, since his state was already beyond whitening? And so he let it pass, though it stabbed him to think that she could have believed it. It did not dawn upon him, humiliated as he was in his own eyes, that all the rest was nothing to her, and this wrong the one thing unpardonable.

"I go," he answered; "I cannot wonder

that you should despise me. If you knew all —but 'tis no matter now—'tis just that you should blame me."

"I have not blamed you," she replied. "The time for that is past; there is no blindness left. 'Tis natural that you should wish to be free from me, but you need not have come to tell me so."

"To tell you *so*—nay——"

"Enough," interrupted she. "The past is past indeed. There is no link between us to justify reproach or explanation. Farewell: I wish you happy."

"Oh, in all my sins," cried he, "have I deserved this?"

"Why do you linger?" she asked. "Are there formalities needed? Dr. Barnard will perform them for me. Go, break asunder the vow you made to me, and live, free from me, the life you would have chosen. Go from me to your cousin. She is but a mile off."

Eustace could bear no more. The wholesome instinct that longed for truth between them was driving out the false dream of self-sacrifice.

"My cousin!" he cried. "My cousin is nothing to me. Dorothy, answer me. Is it possible that you believe——"

He stopped short, for there was a shadow and a rustle between them and the sunlight A woman's figure stood framed in the open window, and drawing nearer, revealed itself as Lady Silverlock's. The two stood staring at her, silent, but she was at no loss for words.

"I found the gate open," said she, airily. "I ventured to enter unannounced. And indeed the scene repays me. Eustace, my dear Eustace, I heard you had arrived. I am indeed rejoiced to welcome you. And Dorothy, the stony-hearted Dorothy, is melted? Ah, child, child, I knew how it would be. A little danger, a little glory, and we are but wax in the flame. I give you joy, cousins both. What, silent? Nay, remember, I am no stranger. I am but Rosa, who saw your wooing, and your wedding, and your parting, and am now come in time to see your reunion."

Dorothy stood motionless and silent; but Eustace had had time to see that here was

the moment to put an end to all doubts. "Madam," said he, "you come in good time. I had but now addressed to my wife a question which you, better than any other person, can answer."

"Madam!" interjected Lady Silverlock. "He calls me 'madam'! Why this solemnity, Eustace? Good Lord, you alarm me."

Eustace turned again to Dorothy. The air of repentance and submission had left him, and was replaced by something of command. He, too, had grown more resolute in his twelve months' suffering.

"I ask you, Dorothy, here in my cousin's presence, do you believe that I ever loved her since the time I saw you?"

And though she believed she knew these words but the cover of a falsehood, the direct tone, the clear questioning gaze, brought a certain comfort to her heart. She answered, with her eyes on his,—

"I know it. I have seen your letter to her."

But behind the words a change was coming into her mind. In the moment when she said that she knew, she had begun to doubt. Truth

was recognising truth, in spite of all that lay between.

"My letter! what letter?" demanded Eustace. "As I live, I never wrote a letter to my cousin since the day when she was Rosa Lackland."

A sudden change crossed his face, and he cried out quickly: "Rosa, did you show to Dorothy the letter that you showed to me in the churchyard?"

His cousin drew back. "I don't understand," said she faintly.

Eustace paid little heed to her.

"Dorothy, what said this letter? Was it a protestation of unalterable affection?"

Poor Dorothy felt a horrible revulsion of certainty. "Ay, that was the letter," said she. "Doubtless you remember it." Again tears were clutching at her throat, but indignation helped her to master them. "Enough of this comedy," she cried. "What can you hope to gain from me by protestations?"

"Nothing. I hope to gain nothing; but I cannot bear that you should doubt the one thing true in me. Rosa, answer me, as you must answer one day at the great account of

all. Is it not true that I never addressed a word of love to you since the day when you became Lady Silverlock?"

She smiled, and shrugged her shoulders. But Eustace did not break out into violence, as she had expected. He stood before her, looking at her and waiting for her reply. Dorothy felt all her strength leave her. She sat down, and tried to command her limbs to cease from trembling.

Lady Silverlock turned aside with petulance. "Eustace, why will you be so solemn?" said she, with a laugh that rang untrue. "You know I would answer to please you if I could. But how can I, when you know well that not once but a hundred times you have protested to me your unchanged affection?"

Strange contradiction! At that instant Dorothy's clearest conviction was that this woman was speaking falsely. Her whole heart echoed Eustace's denial. Through all her tumult of doubt and pain and suspicion she felt as if it were her own voice, rather than his, that declared it a lie.

"As you will, sir,' said Lady Silverlock.

"The world, I think, will know which story to believe. Yes, Dorothy, 'tis even so: your husband did me the honour to find me amiable. But what of that? You know that your attractions over-pass mine. You are wealthy, and your aunt is dead. You do well to forgive and forget. And Eustace, I doubt not, will be more circumspect in future."

"Oh, if I had but known this sooner!" cried Eustace. "That letter, Dorothy, was indeed mine, but it was written years ago, before my cousin's marriage—long, long before I ever saw you."

She shrank together, as if she drew back from any further emotion.

"Nay, Dorothy, hear me. By all that was ever sacred to any better man, I have never loved any other woman since first I saw your face. For me there is no woman in the world but you, no love worth dreaming of but yours, no hope, no happiness, no comfort, but in winning your forgiveness. I thought to die and leave you free—but that, after all, is a coward's thought. No, I accept my life, and I will make it such that my name shall be no

discredit to you. Put on me what penance, what banishment you will, only believe me—tell me that you believe me!"

Lady Silverlock's patience could endure no more. "Ay, tell him that you believe him, Dorothy," she cried out, with an angry laugh. "You know that will be the end—if not to-day, then next week or next month. And as for me, I withdraw, my dear; you need have no fear of me, for on my life, I am of a less forgiving temper."

Dorothy lifted her head, and replied slowly in a faint voice: "I will tell him so, Lady Silverlock, for it is true. I pray Heaven to forgive me for the folly of having believed you. Your falsehood has made me guilty of a great injustice, for which I shall hardly pardon myself. But you I can pardon, because it is your coming which has led me to the truth. For a year I have feared the thought of you, but now I fear you no more. You can never do me harm again, and I give you freely my forgiveness as well as my farewell."

Eustace was at Dorothy's side before she had finished her first sentence. She, however,

neither turned to him nor looked at him. Her eyes were still upon Lady Silverlock.

"Forgiveness! Insolent!" exclaimed that lady.

"Captain Lackland," said Dorothy, "your cousin waits for you to give her your hand to her chariot."

Eustace moved a step forward. His cousin drew back. "Keep your civilities, Captain Lackland, for your lady," said she, in a voice that tried to be as calm as her adversary's. "In that quarter they may still be profitable. As for me, I have no taste either for rapture or rusticity. I leave you to matrimony, and the late Miss Marlowe's fortune."

She flung out of the room, and the two were alone together. Dorothy had stood up, a strange look of irresolution on her face. As Eustace drew near, she once more shrank together, and clasped her hands suddenly over her face. He called her by her name, entreating her to speak to him. He felt that she was trembling from head to foot.

"I can't! I can't!" she cried. "I know it was false, but I have believed it all this time."

"Don't you know, Dorothy, that I have loved you always, since that first day when you came upon me blindfold, and pulled off the handkerchief, and looked up at me?"

He loosened her hands, and the brown eyes, swimming in tears, looked up at him once more. He stood, only half satisfied, thankful to have her hands in his, afraid to press for the distinct assurance of words. As they stood so, there was a hurried entrance of two breathless gentlemen—Sir John Goldwin and Dr. Barnard.

"Captain Lackland!" exclaimed the Doctor.

"She is not here!" panted Sir John.

Then Dr. Barnard recovered himself. "My dear Dorothy," said he, "forgive this intrusion. Sir John perceived Lady Silverlock coming this way. He feared a meeting between you. He begged me to interpose. But I fear our interposition comes at an unhappy moment."

Eustace, for his part, was greatly disconcerted by this interruption. He moved a little from Dorothy's side, and would have let loose her hand. It was she who retained his; he saw

with surprise that her self-command had come back to her. She smiled.

'Nay, Dr. Barnard," said she. "I am glad you should be here, and, Sir John, you, too. You are in time to bid my husband welcome——"

"Ah!" cried Sir John.

"To his country and to his wife, who has never known a happy day since he left her, till this which brings him back."

"Dorothy!" cried Eustace, "you forgive me? you accept me?"

"I love you," she answered. "And this is our wedding day."

"Truly," said Dr. Barnard, "I think it is."

IV.

MOONLIGHT AND FLOODS.

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THE floods were out at Wendelthorpe. Boats were moving hither and thither in the lower-lying streets, and out in the open country field after field was changed to a lake. From amidst the waters rose a solitary farm-house, black against a darkening sky. The surging flow heaved and tossed and struck heavily upon it; here was no languidly spreading expanse, but the hurry of the swollen river rushing impatiently forward, and rising in its impatience higher and ever higher. At an upper window six persons were gathered, watching the motions of a light that came and went slowly, and seemed to be drawing nearer by degrees. The group was made up of the farmer, his wife, their three children, and a young man who was the eldest daughter's lover. The light was manifestly approaching,

the dark shape of a boat became distinct, they heard the dip and splash of oars; at last the boat paused in the lee of the house, and their rescue was secure. It could be seen now, in the light of the lantern, that there were several persons in the boat, and that one of them was a woman.

A voice called upward to those within, "How many are you?"

And a voice called downward in reply, "Six."

To that answer followed a moment of silence.

Then, amid the sound of the water, came up the words, "We have only room for four."

"Shall you be able to come back for the others?" asked the farmer.

Again followed a pause, brief, but sufficient to foreshadow the coming negative.

No, hardly; it was getting too dark and too dangerous.

Within were quick questionings and denials, a half-heard debate, caught and lost again between the ominous beating of the rising floods. By daybreak the housetop would scarcely be left above water, even if the

walls should be strong enough to hold out so long.

"Jack and I will stay," said the farmer at last.

"If Jack stays, so will I," answered the clear voice of his daughter.

Then a man rose in the boat and said, "There is no woman who would say that for me, and so let me stay.

The others in the boat looked at him as he stood leaning one hand against the wall. He was a stranger who had reached Wendelthorpe only that afternoon, and had volunteered his services at the starting of the boat.

The woman sitting in the stern moved a little and said, "I will stay, too;" and all eyes turned back to her. Her they knew. She was the new mistress of the village school, a grave young woman, and reported eccentric.

There was no remonstrance from the boat, only a slow, ruminating surprise; from above, indeed, came protests, but faint and quickly overruled.

A window was opened in a lower story; the two entered upon a landing that was already

flooded, and went quickly upward. Warm, broken thanks met them, and eager promises of return in the first hour of dawn. Then, from the upper window, the two watched the embarkation of the six, heard their shouts of thanks and of farewell, then the dip of the oars, and felt at their hearts a sudden blank. They stood side by side, watching the wavering progress of the departure, and the wavering reflection of the shaken light. At last, when the boat was far away, and no dim echo reached them of its sounds, they turned towards each other and towards the inner room. The room had, in the interval, grown nearly dark, and as they turned this way they heard the flap of the water, like a step on the staircase.

"Have you any hope of their coming back in time?" asked the woman.

Her companion answered, "No"; and she saw through the darkness that he shook his head.

"Nor have I," said she.

They stood aimlessly, looking into the fast darkening room. They had no occupation but to await the coming up of the water, and they

were strangers, who had never so much as beheld each other's faces by full daylight. The wind and the water went sweeping by outside, and in the house were ghostly sounds of doors and windows stealthily tried and shaken.

"Had we not better go up to the attic while we can?" asked the man by-and-by.

She assented, and they went inward to the dark core of the house. The inky solitude below was full of creakings and rustlings; above shone a square of yellow light, revealing a steep ladder. A lighted lantern had been left for them in the attic, together with food and warm wrappings.

"I will fetch the lantern," said he, and swung himself quickly upward.

She stood below, holding fast to the side of the ladder. His quick step sounded above her head; the light shifted and brightened, she saw his face in a quick illumination; then the light whirled towards and beyond her, down, down, into the darkness, and crashed upon the stairs. Her breath stood still; she had a sickening feeling of being left alone. Assurance of her companion's safety reached her,

however, in the form of an imprecation, checked, indeed, but hearty, uttered about two feet above her.

"The handle of the lantern was loose," said he, as he came to her level. "I'll go down and fetch it up."

"No, don't! it is too dark. Please don't! let us go up."

She had found his arm in the darkness, and held him back. In the darkness, which was much the blacker for that brief interposition of light, they made their way into the attic, and crossing it carefully, afraid of the low roof, afraid of unseen stumbling-blocks, afraid of returning upon the yawning aperture, made their way to the grey square of the window. Here they found a large box, upon which they sat down. They spoke but little; there were so few things left worth utterance in such an hour as this. By-and-by, as their eyes grew accustomed to the dimness, they discerned the general character of their surroundings. There was a table near them with food; there were boxes and bundles and a couple of old pictures, brought up hither apparently when the tide

began to rise. In the middle lay the black square through which they had made entrance; at the far end a rough heap of straw was dimly distinguished, and from this came restless gnawings, scrapings, and rustlings, causing the woman to shrink and shudder.

"I suppose they are rats," she said once, when the sounds grew louder.

"I suppose so. Do you mind very much?"

"No, if we could only see them."

Again for a while they were silent, hearing the little sounds within and the ever-increasing sounds without.

At last the man stood up, and, passing his hand across his face, said, "Oh! this is very cold-blooded! They used to torture witches so, fixed to a stake, when the tide was coming up."

He moved to and fro impatiently, and stood still by the table.

"Could you not eat something?"

"No, thank you."

He broke himself a piece of bread, and, returning to the window, ate a few mouthfuls. He pushed open the lattice and leaned out.

The water was rising rapidly, and was already washing on the window of the room below. He turned back towards her a face of dismay: hers as she sat within the room was not clearly visible, but her attitude was calm and undisturbed. He sighed, and came back quietly to sit beside her. But his quietness was of short duration. He asked, after a few minutes, "Would you not like to get out upon the roof? We shall have to do it sooner or later, and I don't think we should feel quite so much imprisoned."

"Oh yes, let us go. Is there a trap-door?"

"I don't think there is. I looked just now. But I can get up through the window—the roof is close above—and then I can help you."

He set his foot on the window-sill, and thrust his head and shoulders through the narrow opening. "Oh yes, it is quite easy. But how it blows! We had better have some of those shawls."

She brought them and handed them out, watched him draw himself up, and then mounted in her turn from box to window-

ledge, and, reaching her hands upwards, found herself lifted safely to the summit.

The surge of wind and water was terrific; her hat was blown away at once, and she was blinded by her hair. When she had freed her face, and drawn up her shawl over her head, she was able to perceive that the roof was formed of two long parallel gables, and that between them, at each end, a stack of chimneys rose from a solid platform. They went forward to the more sheltered group, and sat down on the block of brickwork at the base. They had before them the wide, desolate expanse of waters; below them torrents ran thundering between dwelling and outhouses; and in the pauses of the cannonade that beat the walls, and of the rushing and rending sounds within, they heard a southern wind drifting with sighs between the chimneys. There was no token of life, no light, no sound of hope. Yet they felt a sense of relief and freedom in being here, where they could see and know what was befalling.

"Oh, this is better!" said she, and lifted up her face to breathe the fresher air.

"One would say," said he, watching the dark cameo of her face, as it detached itself from the straight line of masonry, "that you had a kind of enjoyment of all this."

"In a sense I have. There is so much space and power. And there is the feeling of having for once put action and responsibility out of one's hands. There is nothing now which it can possibly be one's duty to do."

"You don't feel any fear of death, then?"

"I fear it physically, of course—the actual drowning and choking—ah! don't let us talk of it. But at least we shall have had this hour of freedom and rest."

"I could bear it bétter," he returned, "if there were any element of struggle. To sit still in a cage until death chooses to come and put an end to you—that's horrible!"

She turned towards him and seemed to consider his point of view until it became hers, for she shuddered and said, "It is horrible!"

There was silence again between them for a little while. Again, when her face was bent forward, he was able to watch its outline.

Surely she was younger than he had supposed?

"What made you stay?" he asked suddenly. She hesitated a little.

"What made *you*?"

"I hardly know, more than what I said—that nobody cared much whether I did or not, and that I did not care much myself. But I am older than you, and I have had about as much out of life as it will ever give me."

"I don't think that it need be a question of age how much one's life is worth. Mine did not matter to any one, either; and it was not very easy or hopeful for myself. I had wanted so much, and had to learn that I must do with so little. Of course it is not noble to care so much about one's own petty happiness, but oh! one does care! And then, all at once, here was a way of escape, not selfish, but to help happier people, and . . . it seemed the key to everything when you stood up in the boat and said that you would stay."

"Yet," said he, "I could not help wondering, as we stepped out, whether what we were really giving to those young lovers was only

time to lose their love for each other, even in remembrance. For death can only destroy the future, but life can destroy the past, too."

"Are you sorry, then, that you stayed?"

There was a little note of mockery in the question, or his conscience created it.

"No; it seemed the thing to do. One can but act in the present. And even if a man could know certainly that death would keep their love for them, and life would lose it, he could hardly bring himself to say, 'Then let death come.' It takes Apollo to give death when he is asked for the best gift. But yet, what a chance for two lovers to have died together so!"

She drew a rather deeper breath and made no spoken answer.

Down at the far horizon the late moon was rising, vague and cloudy. A ghostly light, bringing in its wake mysterious shadows, spread slowly as the moon drowsily lifted herself, and dropped the mists from her shoulders. The man, looking down, in this clearer light, to the water, started and said, "It is coming up much faster."

She stooped and looked. Then their eyes, lifting, sought each other. Both faces were pale in the moonlight. On both sat the human shrinking from this upward crawling fate. Yet it was something to see each other.

"How long is it to morning?" she asked.

He drew out his watch, but there came a cloud across the moon and they had to wait.

"It is just past twelve," said he.

"Perhaps they will come out by moonlight."

"Perhaps," said he. But neither of them had any trust in the hope.

He had seen in the moment when they looked at each other that she was indeed younger than his first supposition, though hardly so young as his second. She might be five-and-twenty. It was not the face of a girl. She had returned to her former position, and now, leaning back against the chimney, lifted up her face to the sky. Her eyes were closed and her lips drawn in. There was but time to look once before the lips curved again to a smile, and the eyes opened to a calm gaze.

The man sitting by her heard the changing

and deepening tone of the water as it came up and up.

"You are too young for this," said he abruptly.

His voice had changed and deepened like the tone of the water.

"No, no," she answered after a moment. "Don't trouble about me."

"I do trouble about you. It's horrible, horrible!"

She again kept silence for a little space; then she said: "When I heard you say--that —in the boat, and get up to stay, I felt, suddenly, as if it was a cruel thing not to stay with you, too—as well as to save them."

She had been obliged to speak the last words loudly; for the wind rose suddenly and fiercely, and the shock of the water broke noisily on the walls. And as she ceased came a terrible crash; the whole building creaked and swayed; there were heavy splashes in the water, and water spouted over them as they caught and clung to each other. Long hair was blown before his face. They held each other fast, panting and trembling. She freed a hand,

and drew aside her hair. There was a sound of water, running, trickling, and dropping. The calm moon, pursuing her leisurely pathway, passed out from behind a cloud, and showed them that the platform at the other end of the house had given way, and the stack of chimneys opposite had fallen.

"If it had been these!" said she.

They crouched nearer together, each still holding to the other. The fear in each mind now was the fear of being divided, of losing all human companionship. The waters were rising faster, rising, as it seemed, with a malignant, hungry joy.

"It can't be long now," said the man.

"No," said she.

There were a few more lifelong moments in which they sat silent, breathing hard. The wild gust of wind abated; the moon found a wide, open archway among the clouds; the face of the waters grew by comparison still again.

"And so," said he, "it was for me you stayed, and even at the end I can't go away in peace without pulling down some one else. And

you, who stayed, are a stranger, and we shall die here together, strangers. Oh the irony of this world! All my life I have been solitary and deserted. It has been my fault—no doubt it has been my fault; and now life is over. It's all too late, and there's no time."

She remained silent, and the monotonous pulse of the water throbbed below.

"But if, by any miracle, we should be saved, at least we know each other now," said he.

"Do we? Well, the depths, perhaps, of each other, but not the shallows. If we were to be saved, we should feel like friends till we came to land, and then you would go your way, and I mine; and if we were to meet once a week for a twelvemonth, we should speak to each other at first, and then we should nod and smile, and by-and-by we should pass and take no notice. No, what knowledge or friendship we have does not belong to this life!"

"You believe, then, in another?"

"It is hardly that I believe in another life, so much as that I can't believe in death. We could not be capable of so much, and desirous of so much, and nothing come. We have not

half enough. I feel so much, much more. No, I am not afraid. There's more."

He in his turn was silent. Perhaps he forbore, out of pity, to put forth a word against her hope; perhaps in his soul, too, a like hope, which he had taken to be long dead, began to stir and murmur.

The moon had put on, minute by minute, a fuller glory; it was illumining an arch of clouds, and beyond the arch lay measureless, liquid, lucid depths. She looked, and pointed upward. The full glow shone on her face. He saw in her dark eyes a slow ineffable softening; in all the lines of her features breathed a spirit of exultant reception.

"The open doorway of infinity," said he, fitting to this radiance its apt poetic description, but without anything of the poet's rapture or belief. Her lips moved to a recognising smile

"And can you look up to that and despair?" she asked.

"That has no voice for me. It is too far off, too silent, too unmoved. That glory may come back, as serene, to look down on my drowned face. But you have come to die with

me. What hope there is in life or death you have shown me. I don't know that it is lasting, or that it is good for much; but such as it is, it comes from you."

Again the water came rushing over the fallen chimneys, and they looked out in momentary apprehension. But the sudden torrent subsided, and the waters went on rising again slowly as before.

He then quietly proceeded: "One thinks of life as the life one has known. To-night a glimpse has come to me of something that seems to make life worth going on with. It may be life on the other side of a division; I can't tell. I don't want to be carried back into the old life, but I do want life—the life that I nearly saw just now, when we thought that our time was upon us. And I have found you, standing with me upon the brink. We do not know each other, you say; we are not friends, and we can't be. I don't know. I only know that I would neither go on nor back, alone."

Her hand, which still clung to his arm, trembled, and was withdrawn, and in the next moment stole softly into his.

They sat quite silent, and the endless night drew on. Memories rose before each of them of hopes and dreams that had once been all in all, and now were small and faint and immeasurably distant. Around them, rising always, surged the persistent waters. Now and again gusts of wind awoke suddenly and brought a sweep of waves over the submerged masonry.

Presently, oozing drops began to creep between the chimneys, behind them.

"We must go up higher," said the man.

They quitted their sheltered nook, and mounting, stood upon the platform of brickwork. The wind flung itself upon them in fury. They clung to the chimneys and to each other, and for a few minutes stood so, battling strenuously to keep their foothold.

The man cried out suddenly, "Oh! if there were only some place for you! It is too hard a death for you. I am so sorry for you."

And even while he spoke, the water was up about their feet, snatching and dragging at them.

"I am not sorry," she answered. "And oh

no! it is not hard; it is the best moment life has ever brought me!"

Her voice was blown away as it crossed her lips. It was only because they were uttered at his ear that he could hear her words. And his, of reply, the winds snatched and carried away for ever. The time of words was over. There was nothing now but hard-drawn breath, and the vain struggle of resistance, and then, a placid moon, shining over a waste of floods.

V.

IN A LONDON STREET.

V.

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IN one of those many melancholy London streets, whose sordid present is haunted by the memory of a brilliant past, there dwelt a man whose story was not unlike that of the street. The world to which he was born had forgotten him, and the world into which he had sunk had never learned to know him. He lived alone in his one dingy room, where neither friends nor letters ever came to him, and worked there at copying, transposing, and resetting music for publishers. His room was high up in the house, and above him, in a very garret, lived a little needlewoman called Mary Ann Redwood. She, like himself, was no newcomer in the house, and like him she was shy and lonely. Her loneliness, however, was of later date ; for when she first came hither, she had come with her mother, and the two women

had worked together. The mother was now dead, and the daughter pursued her monotonous path alone. Sometimes she went out to work, and came home, pale and weary, at night. Sometimes she had work at home, and sat all day stitching, close under her sloping window. Sometimes she had no work, and sat in her cold room, hungry and unoccupied. From time to time she heard the man in the room below finger out a passage on an old piano. She knew him by sight, and knew that his name was Carr. She knew, too, that he belonged by origin to a higher social plane, and thought of him on that account with a kind of awe.

One evening, when she had been all day without employment, she came to the door of her dark garret, and stood listening at the head of the staircase, seeking companionship in the distant sounds of the house. Far below, she heard loud voices and rough laughter; nearer at hand tinkled a faint, plaintive thread of melody. The tune was *Home, sweet home*, but Mary Ann did not know its name. The regretful rise and fall of the thin notes brought no associations, but their attraction drew her,

step by step, to the lower landing, and thence to the unclosed door of the dark room. Music, except from a stray barrel organ, or from the droning harmonium of a little chapel to which she sometimes went, was an unknown language to her. To-night she was tired, and sadder than usual; the notes cried out to her like a voice uttering all the desolation and weariness of life. Sudden tears rose to her eyes, and a sob broke from her lips. The sounds within stopped short. She was frightened, but too much agitated to find presence of mind for retreating. The door was opened upon darkness; the quick scrape and spark of a match followed; then, across the streak of light, she saw Carr's face, looking out in inquiry and some displeasure.

"It's only me, sir—Mary Ann, from upstairs," said she, greatly abashed. "I was listening to the music—I won't do it again."

He had lighted an ill-smelling paraffin lamp, and now turned back to her. The look of displeasure had altogether vanished. The man was musician enough still to care for an appreciative hearer.

"You like music, then?" said he.

"Yes, sir," Mary Ann answered.

"Come in, then, if you like, and hear some more," said he; and he set a chair for her by the old piano.

His accent, his very movement, though both had lost much of the old polish, retained something still from their earlier days that impressed the little needlewoman with a profound sense of his social superiority. She admired too—as poor people often do extravagantly admire—the whiteness and slenderness of his hands, though a more experienced observer might have read in them as much of ill health as of distinction.

She sat down timidly, and he played to her, air after air, a score or so of simple, well-known tunes, given with but a note or two of bass to the plain first part. She listened with deep and humble attention. When he finished, and she rose to go away, he bade her come again another day, if she cared to do so. She thanked him delightedly, and went back to dream in her dark solitude of music and Mr. Carr.

He, too, thought for half an hour or so of his visitor, and then his thoughts swung back to the accustomed past, in which, indeed, they lived—a past in which such a figure as Mary Ann's could have no possible part. He saw himself a youth at college, with many friends, many hopes, and great expectations of wealth. Then he saw himself in London, dallying idly with music, and looking forward to a happy life, shared by the woman whom he loved. The wealth for which he looked had failed him, and she had failed him too. Her face rose up before him in the dingy room, and he murmured, rather with melancholy pleasure than with any passionate regret, the name of Flora. She was married now, long ago, but in his memory she lived unchanged as the girl of twenty from whom he had parted. He had taken his misfortunes quietly, making no effort against them. His was one of the natures, not happily very common, to which much endurance is easier than even a little conflict. He fell out of sight, dropped into the habit of his music-copying, and became the Mr. Carr whom Mary Ann Redwood met coming up and down

on the stairway of a shabby London lodging-house. A strange ending to all the training and anticipations of his youth ; a strange life to be led in the midst of a multitudinous city ; and not the less strange for being but one of hundreds such in this wilderness of London.

Months went on. Mary Ann from time to time, but not too often, for she always dreaded to presume, availed herself of her neighbour's invitation to come and hear him play. She grew to know the tunes, and learned to hum them out to herself as she sat alone. By infinitely small degrees something like a friendship arose between the two. He asked her about herself, and finding one hard winter that she was scantily employed, he went the length—great for him, who rarely uttered more than a "good-morning," or "good-evening"—of speaking of her to the people for whom he worked. His application was fortunate, and Mary Ann gained a week's earnings. She came home through the frozen streets, on the first day of this week, feeling a glow of happy gratitude at her heart. Mounting the stairs, she paused at Carr's door and knocked softly,

meaning to go in and thank him. There was no answer, and, as the door was unlatched, she pushed it open. He was sitting at the table, and had fallen asleep. The lamp was unlighted, and the fire was but a dull red handful, but a broad sheet of moonlight spread inward from the window, and showed beyond it the sharp white edges of snow-laden roofs. His face, distinct in the cold light, was pale and worn, the lips drawn, the hollows of the eyes large and dark. A sudden chill ran through her as she looked, and she knew, for the first time, that he was ill. She stole away, closing the door softly, and went upstairs to weep by herself. He presently awoke, coughing; and his thoughts, following his broken dream, went back to Flora—Flora, who in her warmest mood had never, for a moment, rated his love as worth the risk of poverty. Of Mary Ann he thought, as "that little girl upstairs." Her age and her position alike placed her in another world.

She, from that day, was always seeking various little ways of tending him, watching him, caring for him. She came more often

now, hoping to be of use to him. By daylight, and as warmer weather came, he seemed to her to look better. The change in the tone of his voice was no index to her, nor, indeed, to him, of the increasing evil. The next winter, too, was milder. Their old companionship had grown now to a habit; and to Carr the habitual was always dear. His nature had the "malady of constancy," and Mary Ann was beginning to have a place in his constancy too.

One day, as she sat listening, he stopped playing, and said: "Mary Ann, this is my birthday."

"Is it, sir?" said she.

"I am forty-seven to-day," said he, slowly; and after a moment, "you'll know it, when they want it for my burial register."

She said nothing. It was the first time she had known he thought of death. He, too, was silent. She rose, after a minute or two, and went away. She was very pale; but she was always pale, and Carr observed no change.

Not many days later he caught cold. For a week he kept his room, and Mary Ann, when she was at home, tended him as she had

tended her sick mother, years before. Then came the days when he could no longer rise. Mary Ann appeared, then, at all hours of the day. He asked her once: "Have you no work, Mary Ann?"

"No, sir," she answered quietly.

The woman of the house brought a doctor. Carr, when he was told of his coming, said wearily, "Let him come; it will simplify his certificate by-and-by."

Neither of the women quite understood.

The doctor, having looked at the sick man, gave a few directions to Mary Ann—warmth, nourishment, wine—and said it would be useless for him to come again. He was a busy man who worked much among the poor, and had learned to reserve his labour for those whom it could help.

So day by day Carr lay dying slowly, thinking, in his weakness, of Flora and of his youth, which seemed, now, quite near and instant. The actual it was, which was but dream and shadow. Mary Ann sat by him, attentive to his every movement, glad to endure loss and privation for the sake of waiting on him.

One night he asked her: "Mary Ann, do you know my name?"

"Mr. Carr," she answered, wondering.

"I think," said he, "that there is no one living now who knows my Christian name."

And he told her that it was "Anthony," saying it twice over, and spelling it to her.

Then again he fell into silence.

Another time he showed her an old photograph and a lock of hair, saying only: "Will you see that they bury these with me?"

She said, "Yes."

Then at last came an early morning, when in the cold light of the new day, he woke and found her sitting quite still, in her black dress, beside his bed. He looked in silence, and the dream of the past fell away from him.

"Mary Ann," said he, and her eyes turned at once towards him. He looked at her for a moment, still without speaking, then said in the changed voice that changed more and more every day, "How long is it that I have known you?"

"Four years," said she.

"And how old are you?" he asked again.

Till to-day he had always thought of her as a child.

"Four-and-twenty," she answered.

He closed his eyes again, and sighed deeply more than once.

It was an hour or so later that she found him looking at her again with a strange and altered gaze. When he saw her move, he put out a feeble hand, and said faintly: "Kiss me, my dear."

She did so; then again he closed his eyes, and lay motionless, and so, without another word, passed through from the mystery of life into the mystery of death.

Mary Ann, when all was over, laid the curl and the photograph upon the silent heart, drew up the sheet over the silent face, and went away, in the full brightness of daylight, to her empty room.

VI.

A LONG DAY.

VI.

A LONG DAY.

I.

THE modern physician, perhaps, appears to us but an unromantic successor to the mediæval leech, whose good offices were so dangerous to many a stalwart contemporary. Yet few men, out of a fairy tale, pass through experiences so varied and so conflicting as those of the medical student. He leaves school, a careless boy ; he becomes one in the community of a great hospital ; things sorrowful, ghastly, and repulsive become his daily sights and studies ; he goes in and out of the poorest and most hopeless of human dwellings, and witnesses—sometimes before he is twenty —all that is at once most sordid and most tragic in city life. He, himself, is living, perhaps, all this time, in a bright, thoughtless

home; the contrasts of his two existences are sharp and perpetual.

An adventure which shows this contrast in its most vivid light happened some years ago to a young man, named Lewis King, who was a student at one of the largest London hospitals. He was a "third-year's man," that is to say, he was passing through the last of a student's three years of hospital work, and was expecting soon to take his degree, and pass from the status of a medical student to that of a "qualified man." He was diligent, ambitious, and intelligent; he had a private theory or two; he was also in love with a young lady, whose parents would not permit an engagement until the suitor should have at least some immediate prospect of a practice. His anatomical skill and knowledge had gained him the post of prosector to Dr. Markwell, one of the hospital lecturers. The office of a prosector is, as the title implies, to prepare for the lecturer the "parts" which are to exemplify his discourse. Now, Dr. Markwell was not only a distinguished scientific man, whom it behoved any student to please, but he was also

an old friend of Mr. Barrett, the father of Miss Laura Barrett. It is probable that this learned man never had any other prosector who was so respectful, so attentive, and so careful. Lewis's preparations for Dr. Markwell, his ordinary hospital routine, his study of certain minute nerve-phenomena in verification of a budding theory, together with that inevitable reading for an examination, which forms the background of every student's life, left him very little time for the prosecution of his wooing. And there was not wanting an enemy to whisper into the ear of the young lady that her lover's neglect was neglect indeed, and not merely enforced occupation. A fellow-student, whose envy of Lewis's hard-won pre-eminence was sharpened by an admiration for Miss Laura Barrett, seized an opportunity of hinting that Lewis, feeling certain of her affection, was becoming careless. Laura gave no acknowledgment of being moved ; but the hint rankled. Yet though the seed of division remained and germinated, the young man who sowed it would scarcely have been gratified could he have discerned its first fruits. Hitherto, Laura

had, indeed, bestowed on Lewis a very considerable portion of her thoughts; but after this he occupied every corner of them. She pored over his words, his looks, over everything which he had done and everything which he had left undone. She perceived, resentfully, that her feeling for him lay involved in every meditation, hope, or plan that ever presented itself to her. She began to take note of every day on which Lewis failed to come, and at last grew to suspect at times that Mr. Rogers, the fellow-student, might have some grounds for his insinuation. And the more this idea pressed upon her, the less friendly did she feel towards Mr. Rogers who had suggested it, and the more did she desire to show him, not only that Lewis was mistaken if he thought himself certain of her, but also that it was a mistake to suppose that he thought so.

She assumed towards poor Lewis a quite new tone of indifference; and when he pressed her for the cause, she replied coldly that she was not willing to impose her friendship upon a person who so very seldom cared to seek her society.

"Laura!" said Lewis, in an accent made up of surprise, reproach, and pain.

And Laura's heart was melted, but the recollection of Mr. Rogers' sayings still irritated her pride.

"You know how busy I am," said Lewis.

"Oh yes," she answered lightly; "and I should be sorry to keep you from your work. You know it is my birthday dance next week. You need not trouble yourself to come again before then—nor then, if you are too busy. I shall quite understand."

Poor Lewis could not tell whether she was angry or whether she was jesting. He went home quite unhappy, and gazed upon the instructive pages of his physiology manual without imbibing any notion of their contents.

Notwithstanding that prohibition, he called twice in the interval at the house of Laura's parents, but either by accident or by design she herself was not to be seen. A formal invitation, in her handwriting, to her birthday party duly reached him, and he promised himself that he would be among the very earliest

of the guests, and would secure the earliest given of Laura's dances.

The morning of the much-anticipated birthday was dull, chilly, and a little foggy. The hospital porter was grumbling that it was more like November than September. Lewis surprised this melancholy minded person by declaring that it was just the weather for a dance. He had come in briskly, eager to get to work; he had a busy day before him. There happened, at this time, to be a patient in the hospital whose condition furnished an opportunity for observing in the living subject those phenomena whose traces for the last six months he had been pursuing through dead nerve-channels. This man he must visit and examine, and must inquire what observations had been made upon him during the night. Then he had to prepare accurately the examples for Dr. Markwell's early lecture tomorrow. This would be no easy or quickly accomplished task. When this was over he would return to his lodging, employ what time remained to him in reading a little more physiology, and then repair to the distant

West End elysium of Laura's home. He had planned out all this as he walked to the hospital, and had it all quite clear in his mind when he gave that cheery reply to the porter.

And then, glancing up, he saw in the rack for letters one addressed to himself. He opened it; it was from Dr. Markwell. That learned man had encountered in the course of a *post-mortem* examination a rare anatomical malformation, and invited Lewis to come, if possible, and examine it with him. He was to be at the doctor's house, if he was coming, before ten. As the hospital clock was then striking nine, and Dr. Markwell's house was at a distance of fully three-quarters of an hour's journey, Lewis had no time to enter upon any of his contemplated occupations. Replacing on his head the hat which he had just removed, he turned back and hastened towards the neighbouring railway station.

Dr. Markwell received him in a friendly and equal manner that was very flattering. They proceeded to their examination, which occupied a considerable time. The observations of Lewis were much approved, and when at last Dr.

Markwell was compelled to start on his round of visits, he invited the young man to accompany him that they might somewhat prolong their discussion. This was an honour not to be refused. Lewis thought within himself, "The physiology must go for to-day," and gladly accepted.

It was nearly one when he arrived for the second time at the hospital. Prudence manifestly dictated that he should take his lunch before going to work. He entered the dark little corner shop to which the students usually resorted. This dingy little haunt has a character and position of its own, and as well deserves description as that famous dining-room of poor Parisians immortalised by Balzac. To Lewis, the half light, the crowd of loudly talking youths, the rattle of pence, and the anxious-faced proprietor coming and going, and replying bravely to the ancient jokes levelled at him anew by every new generation, were familiar parts of his daily life. He was a favourite here, because he behaved quietly, never lingered when his meal was over, and always paid for it on the spot. It had come to

be understood that Mr. King must not be kept waiting, and his comrades were wont to complain that an undue particularity was shown him by the hard-featured daughter of the house.

To-day he was saluted by a different cry.

"I say, King, have you heard about Andrews?"

Andrews was a comrade, an especial friend of Lewis's.

"No, what about Andrews?"

"Run over, last night, just before his own door. Smith and Lane were called to him last night. Dislocated ankle, fractured rib, and severe contusions."

"Is he in the ward?" asked Lewis.

"No, they had got him into his own bed, and Smith thought they had better leave him there. Deane has been to see him, and says he asked for you, but you weren't to be found."

Lewis, knowing the taste of the students for a hoax, began by incredulity, but the young woman at the counter interposed, "Indeed, it's true enough, Mr. King; Dr. Smith told father himself."

Lewis, at that, started up, leaving his lunch

unfinished and unpaid for, and ran across to the hospital in search of Dr. Smith. Dr. Smith had naturally gone to lunch; the porter's account of what he had said was very confused; and Lewis, growing more and more alarmed, hastened to his friend's lodging. There, in the doorway, he met Dr. Smith, who somewhat quieted his terrors. He told him also that a telegram had been sent to the lad's mother, who had returned an answer saying she was on her way. Would Lewis meet her at Euston, reassure her, and bring her hither? Lewis at once assented, and again leaving the hospital behind him started northward, and in due course met Mrs. Andrews, whose gratitude made amends to him for his deserted lunch and his procrastinated labours. Having left her with her son he hurried to the hospital.

The afternoon was now drawing towards its close.

"I must make my examination as short as possible," said Lewis to himself, as, for the third time, he entered the porter's lodge.

He hastened to the bedside of the so deeply

interesting case. A change in the symptoms had taken place during the night, a change which seemed at first sight to contradict Lewis's cherished theory.

He sat down, lost in thought, forgetful of any hurry. Then a possible explanation, too elaborate and technical to be given here, shot into his mind. He sought the house-physician who had described to him the change. This young man had not been made a sharer in Lewis's surmises; Lewis' having, with a very proper allowance for the "personal equation," left the observations of his fellow-investigator free from the possible bias of his own.

He put a few eager questions. The answers were satisfactory. The apparent discrepancy had, as sometimes happens, proved itself a confirmation.

"Then it *is*!" cried Lewis, in a rapture of certainty.

"What? What is—how?" asked the other, staring at him.

Lewis, in brief words, laid before him his theory, which thus confirmed might take rank no longer as a theory, but as a discovery.

The other was startled, half incredulous, deeply interested. Lewis, in the first enthusiasm of a discoverer's joy, forgot all the rest of the world.

At last, the striking of the hospital clock led him to draw out his watch. Starting up with a cry of dismay, he declared he must go at once. It was seven o'clock ; he had before him at least two hours of dissection ; he was not in evening dress ; he had not dined ; and he had meant to be at Laura's by half-past eight.

" I shall have to do my preparation for Dr. Markwell at night, after I get back from the dance," he said to himself.

And so thinking, he hastened to the dissecting room, which, with the other buildings of the college, stands at a little distance from the hospital proper, and is divided from it by an open space which has been found, on occasion, particularly well adapted for snowballing.

The dissecting room was by this time empty, and the shadows were beginning to fall. Lewis laid out his "part" upon a table at the upper end, and went to tell the custodian that he should be returning to work at some late hour

of the night. It had happened occasionally to other demonstrators, as well as once before to Lewis, to be obliged to prepare thus at night for the next morning's lecture. The custodian was quite ready to give him a key, to promise that matches and candles should be put conveniently, and to explain that there was no need for his own sitting up.

Lewis hurried away with the key. The excitements of the afternoon prevented him from feeling fatigue or hunger, but an experienced third year's man knows better than to go without his dinner, especially when he has already missed his lunch.

He sped home, implored his landlady not to keep him waiting; and arrayed himself, with more haste and less care than he could have wished, in a dress suit and white tie. Anticipation took possession of his mind. He ate his dinner quite inattentively; started off, full of hope and eagerness, and had gone as far as the hospital before he recollected that he had left the college key in the pocket of his morning coat, and his latch key on the mantelshelf of his room. This false start lengthened his

journey by some ten minutes. At last he was really on his way, but misfortune pursued him. He had lost a train, and had to wait some minutes for another. Again at the other end there was some delay in procuring a cab, and when at length he reached the house, his ears were saluted by a gay sound of dance music. On entering, he found nearly all the other guests—there were not a great many—arrived. Laura was dancing with Mr. Rogers, who had not found himself detained by any professional duties, and had been here for three-quarters of an hour. He pointed out Lewis's entrance to his partner, who was already quite aware of it, and made some jesting observation on his having succeeded in tearing himself from his studies.

"Mr. King will be a famous physician, riding in his carriage one of these days," said Laura, with a laugh, "and then you will wish that you had been as studious."

"He may be famous, and ride in his carriage," her partner returned, "but he will not have had the first dance to-night with you."

Then Laura was angry with Lewis for not

having had the first dance, and angry also with Mr. Rogers for having had it in his place. This birthday, to which she had so much looked forward, was proving very disappointing.

By-and-by, when this dance was at an end, she was sure that Lewis would come to her. But Lewis was being held in talk by Dr. Markwell.

"Even here," thought Laura, "he can't be content without talking medicine."

Yet, in her heart, she felt a certain triumph that Dr. Markwell should thus distinguish Lewis, and was very certain that no such distinction would ever have befallen Mr. Rogers. When Dr. Markwell released his listener, she had already been summoned to dance. She could, however, see that Lewis stood disconsolately, and made no effort to seek another partner. And at the close of the dance, he came at once to her, wished her many happy returns of her birthday, and put forth anxious petitions for any dances that she might still have to spare. "It is so very long since I have seen you," said he pathetically.

Laura could not but remember that the

delay, this time, was of her making. She did not, however, relent, but answered: "You might have lessened it by an hour, if you felt it so."

"I have been pursuing that hour through the whole day," said poor Lewis, "and even now I really ought to be at work, instead of being here. I shall have to prepare for Dr. Markwell's early lecture to-morrow after I go home."

"I am sorry if it is I that am a temptation to you," said Laura.

"You are the stimulus that taught me to work at all," said Lewis.

"And now," said she, "you begin to forget the teacher in the lesson."

Lewis, unprepared for this retort, looked at her without finding any reply. But Laura had been learning the language of his thoughts long enough to estimate the individual value of his silence—a value which, as we all know, differs greatly—and she began to be remorseful.

"Shall you have to work very long after you go home?" she asked.

"About two hours, I should think; perhaps rather more."

"And is it quite necessary?"

"Quite, quite necessary. Dr. Markwell's lecture is at nine in the morning."

"Then you will have to go home early," said Laura, in a voice of regret.

To which Lewis replied fervently: "I don't care when I go, if only you care about my staying."

Laura became meditative, and turning a somewhat anxious gaze upon him, remarked: "Mr. Rogers does not seem to find his time so very much occupied by work"

"Rogers!" said Lewis in some scorn; and then: "Rogers has not the same reason for work that I have."

"He rather—pretends—that he has," replied Laura, looking down.

At this point her partner came to claim her, and she went away, only pausing to smile at Lewis's grave face and to say to him: "The next."

Lewis remained standing where he was left, looking before him with no diminution of

gravity. That Laura should seem, for a moment, to make a comparison between Rogers, a man whom he knew to be in every way his inferior, and himself, was very grievous to him. And, with the peculiar perversity of misunderstanding which is the special endowment of lovers, he never even perceived that her words might be interpreted either as a warning or a confession.

And when, Laura being set free, he again sought her, he began at once in a grieved and anxious tone: "Did you mean what you said about Rogers?"

"I don't quite remember what I did say."

"You seemed to make a comparison in his favour as to the amount of work and the amount of attention which each of us manages to achieve."

Laura's eyes sparkled; a brilliant smile illumined her face, and she permitted herself a little pause for the sake of contemplating the disturbed, uncertain look of her lover's. It was abundantly clear that he was neither assured nor indifferent. She drew a long breath and said gravely: "I will tell you

something—I am afraid it is rather wrong: I can't bear Mr. Rogers."

After that, all clouds cleared away; they plotted together that Laura should excuse herself from dancing again with Mr. Rogers, and sit talking to Lewis, a scheme of revenge which afforded them great satisfaction.

Somewhat later in the evening, Laura found an opportunity of talking to Dr. Markwell.

"I am afraid, Dr. Markwell," said she seriously, "that you are a very cruel person."

"*I?*" said the worthy doctor, opening his eyes; "and why, Miss Laura, do you think that?"

"You make other people work so hard. Poor Mr. King has got I don't know how much work to do for you before to-morrow morning."

"You don't mean to say he has come here to dance without having prepared my part?" said Dr. Markwell, in a voice of real displeasure.

Laura was frightened at this unexpected result of her words.

"Oh! but he could not help it," she said

hastily, "and you will see, it will all be done."

"I hope so," said the doctor severely. "And as to not being able to help it, it is ridiculous that he should say that when he is here amusing himself."

Laura for a brief moment was silent. Then the desire of exculpating her lover outweighed her bashfulness. Looking up, she said shyly, yet a little proudly: "I suppose he had to neglect either you or me, and thought that I was likely to be the more inexorable."

"Oh! is that it?" said Dr. Markwell. "In that case I suppose I must admit extenuating circumstances."

"And I don't think," returned Laura, "that you will find there is anything to extenuate."

The good doctor, having received this half confidence, began to be interested in the fortunes of these lovers, and presently took occasion to expatiate to his old friend, Laura's father, upon the talent, industry, and general good conduct of young King.

Laura, unaware of Dr. Markwell's good offices, and a little alarmed by his frown,

sought Lewis out at a comparatively early hour and said to him: "I have kept this waltz for you, if you would like to have it, and then you must go."

"Oh, not yet!" pleaded Lewis.

Laura was charmed by the accent of entreaty.

"Yes, indeed, you must; because of your work. You ought to be very careful about anything for Dr. Markwell—he is such an important person; and besides,"—this with a slight hesitation—"papa thinks so much of his opinion."

"You wish me to go then?" said Lewis, evidently ready to be obedient to any desire.

"I wish it because I think it is better, not because I think it is nicer," she replied.

He made no further demur, but went at the end of the dance to bid her father good-night. Mr. Barrett, in whose ears the commendations of Dr. Markwell were yet ringing, declared himself very sorry that he must go so early, bade him try to come oftener, and finally, in a burst of generosity, invited him to dinner on the next Sunday. Lewis joyfully accepted the

invitation, and turned eastward with a hopeful heart.

The late train by which he travelled had but few passengers, and when he came out from the station into the wide familiar highway, he found it, though still noisy, and in part brightly lighted, no longer crowded. The ill-smelling paraffin lights set up nightly at the edge of the pavement were no longer numerous, and those which yet remained were blurred and made larger by the fog. A few discordant cries of salesmen and saleswomen were still to be heard.

Lewis crossed, away from all this, towards the hospital, and turning in at a gate behind it, directed his steps to the black block of College buildings, indistinct in the darkness. Lights were twinkling in some of the hospital windows, and in the neighbouring street he heard the stumbling progress of some belated drunkard. These were the only signs of life, and these he left behind him when he passed under the black portal of the College. He found his candles duly awaiting him, lighted them, and went on towards the dissecting room.

The long hall lay bare and desolate. Its stone walls and flooring cast a chill, and the two candles shed but a feeble and ineffectual light in its expanse. Lewis felt none of the vague horror which an outsider might have experienced, for this was the scene in which he spent the larger portion of his days. By day, a busy crowd of students surrounded those marble tables. Here by day resounded, amid the ghastly sights from which familiarity had stripped the horror, quick laughter and boyish exclamations. Here Lewis had undergone those palpitating moments of uncertainty in which the explorer hopes, doubts, and grows assured of the truth which he was pursuing. To-night all was bare and deserted. The chill air was chillier than usual, and his step sounded solitarily upon the pavement. To-night, when the lights, the warmth, the music, and, above all, the face and voice of Laura were haunting his senses, the cold dreariness struck discordantly upon Lewis's spirits. He felt no weird or eerie horror, but rather an uncongeniality and distastefulness. Close to the door lay five bodies brought up for the morrow's dissection.

This was also a sight to which he was accustomed, and he gave no heed to it beyond remarking, as he passed, that the attendants, instead of laying them out, each on its table, had carelessly heaped them together, two on one table and three on another, a neglect which he thought reprehensible.

He went forward to the farther end of the room where he had previously laid ready his "part," set a candle at each end of the table, drew a chair for himself between, laid aside his hat, and drew out his instruments. Yet it was some moments before he entered upon his task. This diligent young man felt for once an almost invincible disinclination for employment. The sound of dance music was in his ears; his brain longed to busy itself with pleasant recollections of the earlier evening that seemed already so remote; it seemed impossible to call all its attention to the careful exposing of muscles. But the work was before him, and he knew that it must be done. Sighing, he took up his dissecting knife, and resolved by great effort to banish all discursive thoughts. His occupation required the greatest precision, and his attention

soon became engrossed upon it. His candles formed an island of yellow light amid the foggy shadows of the hall, and in it the head of the young man, bent down in studious attention, and encircled by the light as by a halo, formed a picture worthy of Rembrandt. All was silent, except when the chiming of the hospital clock stirred the air and left it stiller than before.

He had been at work, wakeful now, and sharply observant for a time the duration of which he could not in the least assign, when he heard, at the other end of the room, a sound. It was slight, and not to be instantly identified. It was a rustling, yet a rustling that differed from that of any fabric; Lewis could not otherwise have described it than a sound of movement. He suspended his operations; then, hearing nothing more, and not quite sure whether indeed he had actually heard anything at all, he resumed his work. He intended at first to keep his ear attentive, but by-and-by —after perhaps a minute, although the time seemed to him much longer—he ceased to think of anything but his work. Suddenly he was startled by a recurrence of the sound. He

held his breath and listened. It was a distinctly audible rustling, and it came from the table on which the three bodies were lying. It was a sound as of one of them moving and raising itself on the cold, stiff flesh of the others. Lewis, though of a calm disposition and of well-balanced nerves, felt a most unpleasant thrill of horror. He could no longer deny to himself that he heard the sound. In his eager desire to clutch at some reassurance, he tried to tell himself that it must be a rat; yet he knew that there could be no rat in this stone building. He stooped, and looked between his candles, peering out across the dimness towards the sound. His heart stood still, for it seemed to him as if one of the bodies had changed its attitude and partly raised itself. The very moment of framing such a thought brought the reactionary conviction of its incredibility. He breathed more freely, and told himself that fatigue was permitting his imagination to delude him. He resolved to go on with his work; but his hand shook, and his whole attention was alert for a renewal of that creeping sound. And before long, startling him afresh in spite

of all his preparation, it was renewed. Lewis instantly stooped forward, his eyes straining, his whole being concentrating itself in the earnestness of his outlook. And now he saw, not this time that the body *had* changed its position, but that it was absolutely doing so before his eyes. He stood bent forward, breathless, grasping the edge of the table, his knees failing him, his gaze intent, enlarging, learning to see more clearly through the gloom, and he saw the dead man lift himself before his eyes, slowly, accompanied still by the horrible and increasing rustling. At last it was standing upright upon the floor. Then the sound and the motion ceased, and it remained standing at the foot of its table, facing him, and returning his fascinated gaze by a fixed stare. The process of this watch seemed to Lewis to have become endless, and with its every movement his anguish of sickening horror grew. Now, when there was again stillness, his one clear thought was to keep his eyes upon the figure lest it should move again and approach. It did not enter his thought, as doubtless it has entered, experienced reader, into yours, that this was some

cataleptic patient who had never wholly died. A medical student knows too well the lapse of time between death and dissection, and the condition of a subject when brought up. Moreover, he saw the body as it stood, and saw that there was no such possibility. Nor did he think, as you may have done, of a practical joke played by some inconsiderate companion. There was, in this room, no possible hiding-place, nor could there be any means of communicating motion artificially to the bodies.

He had sunk back upon his chair, still gazing before him, and tried to tell himself that this must be some hideous dream, some trick of the tired nerves. He knew, of course, all about the hallucinations of Mrs. A. recorded by Professor Huxley ; yet it was in vain that he told himself that this was such a hallucination. The sense of an oppressive presence of horror was too strong, so strong that limbs and brain alike seemed numbed. A fear that he might faint came into his mind, dully at first, then with a sudden wakening into sharpness. The terror—the unendurable terror of coming back

to consciousness here, alone, and finding this sight still here in the ghastly silence and dimness, gave him a certain strength to withdraw the other terror. He sat still for a few more immeasurable moments, and began, breath by breath, to draw together his resolution.

The figure was between him and the door; he would have to pass it in escaping. He sat thinking of all this, still looking at his adversary. Slowly, without moving his eyes, he crouched lower in his chair till his hand could reach and furtively grasp his hat lying beneath. When he had attained his hat and held it concealed behind his knees, he again sat still for a brief space. Then, gathering to one head all his courage, he rose up, and in one rush fled past, flung open the door, and flew down the long dark entry hall to the college door. His heart was beating wildly; he was breathless; he kept his eyes turned backward while he felt with his hands for the place of the key in the door. He saw the long darkness of the passage, and through the open door a dim space of yellow light, but nothing else. No

escaped prisoner ever felt more thankful to breathe the outer air. He hastened to get free from the hospital precincts, which seemed to him all infected by the living dead within, and to come out into the dingy street running beside it. The fog had cleared away; a few stars were coming out; the streets were perfectly silent and empty; only the quick fall of his flying footsteps broke the stillness. Soon, as he ran, he heard another sound, the heavy measured tread of a policeman, who, a moment later, showed himself at the street corner. Lewis slackened his suspicious haste and felt that he was in the daily world once more. The man looked at him attentively, and when he had gone by walked a few paces after him. He was far, indeed, from guessing how acceptable to Lewis was his substantial human presence.

Arrived at his lodging he let himself in quietly, lighted his candle, not without anxious glances into every shadowy corner of entry and staircase, and went up to his own room, where, with a renewed sense of thankfulness, he locked himself in. Sleep would, he felt, be out of the

question. He sat down to go over again in his mind the adventure through which he had passed, and to try to assure himself that there must be some natural explanation of the appearance which he had watched. He would not believe in the supernatural; he could not believe that all had been but an illusion of the brain. What then? No cogitation seemed to open any outlet; this way and that way his thoughts brought him to a barrier where Reason stood and said: No thoroughfare.

Suddenly, amid the many windings of his meditations, he started up with a cry, and found himself awakened from sleep. The fatigues and excitements of the day had outweighed the vivid presence of his terrors, and he had fallen unawares into a deep slumber. His candle had burned irregularly, and had a rampart on one side; streaks of cold daylight were showing at each edge of the window blind. His limbs were stiff, from the uneasy posture in which he had slept. Remembrance shot back upon him. But the horror was beginning to be dissipated by absence and

daylight. He rose, drew up his blind, and began to feel the shadows and terrors of night lying behind him. The recollection came prominently before him that his work would not be ready for Dr. Markwell's lecture at nine o'clock. His fellow-students, too, would come. What would be thought of him when he should confess to having been driven from his post by an apparition? Nay, what must he think of himself? It could not be but that there was some explanation, even although his mind could find none. What kind of an investigator could he be, who thus fled in terror from a problem? His part was clearly to return and ascertain the truth. Having thus determined, he at once arrayed himself in more suitable garments, and went out into the empty streets.

It was yet very early. A city cock was crowing in some back yard, and the first risen of city sparrows were bidding one another good-morning before they set out to seek the early crumb. He arrived at the College door and found the key where he had left it in the lock. It was now broad daylight. He went

resolutely up the passage to the open door of the dissecting-room. His pulse confessed emotion, but his face and step were steady.

Yes; it was still there, white, upright, ghastly, and staring. On the distant table the two candles, burning low, shone each as a yellow speck in the daylight. The chilly greyness of dawn made the whole environment seem colder than ever.

It was not easy for Lewis, in spite of his resolution, to go up to the object of his terror. But when he forced himself to do so, the explanation was at once apparent. The bodies had been laid together carelessly; this had been uppermost and had slipped down. But being completely rigid it did not fall in a heap, but slid gently along the furrow formed by its companions. As the feet slipped lower, the head of course was raised, and the figure had finally come to rest in a standing posture, leaning a little backward, prevented from falling sideways by the projecting feet of the others, and held upright by its own rigidity.

Lewis, when he had perfectly assured himself of this, left the body standing, and returned

composedly to his work. Yet, chancing to look up, forgetful, he by-and-by received a sharp momentary shock, quieted at once by recollection. His work was now finished, and the fatigue of the last twenty-four hours was beginning to assert itself. He called the custodian, showed him what had happened, and directed that the body should not be touched till his return.

He hastened across to the hospital, where he related his adventure to his friend, the young house-physician, and gladly partook of some breakfast.

It was now nearly nine o'clock, and the students were assembling. Lewis was assailed on his return to the dissecting-room by a shower of questions; and while the catechism was still proceeding Dr. Markwell arrived. To him, also, the tale was told, and drew from him the apparently incoherent question, "Didn't you begin to think, King, that you had bought your pleasure rather dear?"

Lewis opened wide eyes, then suddenly blushed very much, broke into a broad smile, and said: "No, sir, never once."

As he spoke, the hospital clock began to strike nine, and the four-and-twenty hours to which he looks back as the longest of his life came to their conclusion.

THE END

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